

THE
Perplexed Lovers:

OR, THE
HISTORY
OF
Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. HOGGARD,
FOR
FRANCIS NOBLE, at his Circulating Library, near
Middle-Row, Holborn;
AND
JOHN NOBLE, at his Circulating Library, in *St. Martin's
Court, near Leicester-Square.*

M DCC LXVIII

Perplexed Lovers;

OF THE

HISTORY



OF EDWARD BACHMANN

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

LONDON:

Printed by W. Hogarth,

FOR

James Kearsley, in Queen's Street, and
John Kearsley, in St. Martin's Lane.

(A. & S.)

John Kearsley, in St. Martin's Lane, and
James Kearsley, in Queen's Street.

MDCCLXXIII

THE
HISTORY

OF

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart.

BOOK I.



SIR Edward Balchen was so disgusted with every thing in London, after the marriage of Mr. Wentworth and Miss Wheatly [the former one of Sir Edward's most intimate friends; the latter a lady whom he liked so well, that

VOL. I.

B

nothing

nothing but friendship prevented him from making his addressee to her: nothing but her being pre-engaged to Mr. Wentworth whose happiness he preferred to his own] that he determined to retire into the country, for a while, till he could recover his spirits. The house of one Mr. Belladen in H——shire he chose for his retreat.

This gentleman was possessed of an estate in the pleasantest part of that county, and had been the very intimate friend of old Sir George Balchen, Sir Edward's father. He was, in many respects, a sensible, conversible man, but on some occasions seemed to act as if he was deficient in understanding. He was always fond of a country life, and, having been a widower five years, lived rather in a reclusive way: he was of a studious

studious turn, and, therefore, the more inclined to detach himself from society.

Mr. Belladen had only two children, a son and a daughter; the former of whom had by the wiliness of his behaviour so far alienated his affections from his sister, that upon his marrying a neighbouring young lady his father had given up to him a larger part of his fortune than was thought necessary.

As Sir Edward had received frequent invitations from this gentleman, he now imagined that he had chosen the proper time to accept of them; conjecturing, that from the privacy in which his friend lived, he should be at full liberty to indulge his own thoughts and his own humour without interruption.

He was however, not a little surprized to find, upon his arrival, that Mr. Belladen's daughter was with him, whom he had never seen since she was quite a child, as she had been always with a friend of her mother's, whenever he happened to be in H——shire.

Miss Belladen was, at this time, about two and twenty. She was of a middling height; in her form, easy and genteel; her complexion was fair, and would have been very blooming, had she not been regularly pitted with the small-pox: its lustre, therefore, was diminished, but she had, notwithstanding, a fine blush in her cheeks by which her features, naturally pleasing, were agreeably improved. Her eyes were of a deep blue, full of softness: she had the prettiest mouth imaginable: and when she spoke

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, *Bart.* 5

spoke or smiled it appeared to the utmost advantage. Though the small-pox had a little ruined her face, her neck and arms, which were finely turned, were uncommonly white. There was indeed so much grace in her whole person, that if she could not be properly called beautiful, she was thoroughly agreeable. Her mind was no less amiable than her person—she had a strong understanding improved by reading; she was of a sweet disposition: there was an engaging simplicity in her manners, joined to a most affecting sensibility, and an extream modesty.

Such was the daughter of Mr. Belladen, and in such a light did she appear to Sir Edward Balchen; but as he was entirely prepossessed by the beauties of Mrs. Wentworth's person, and the
B 3 charms

6 The HISTORY of

charms of her mind, he, for a time, but little regarded the amiable Myra Belladen; he only paid her the common civilities due to her sex.

As there had been an unreserved confidence between Sir Edward and Mr. Balladen, he very freely acquainted him with the violent inclination which he could not help feeling for Mrs. Wentworth upon his first acquaintance with her, and which had risen to so great a height, before he knew of her attachment to his friend, that he found it very difficult to conquer it.—I am come down, therefore, continued he, to spend some time with you, in order to divert myself of my inclination for her by new amusements.

Mr. Belladen, though now, not at a time of life, nor of a disposition to
be

be very sensible of the tender passions, had once been powerfully enslaved by them; having been extreamly fond of his wife, and much affected with her loss, which he hourly lamented, he rather looked upon Sir Edward with an eye of compassion, and did every thing he could think of to amuse him. He recommended to him, earnestly, what he had himself found highly beneficial, a closer pursuit of his studies: and particularly urged his application to astronomy, because it was his favourite science. That, and a great deal of exercise, continued he, saved me when I was driven to the depth of despair.

As Sir Edward had a high opinion of Mr. Belladen's understanding, he was the more inclined to follow his advice; and

8 *The* HISTORY of

in a short time he found that advice to be very salutary.

When the weather was fine, he rambled about the fields from morning to night, nay, he sometimes walked in the rain, when it was not very violent. When it was so, he was forced to make calculations with Mr. Belladen; or to converse with Mr. Elrington, a neighbouring gentleman, very able to carry on an improving conversation, and very willing to be sociable.

In point of age, neither Mr. Belladen nor Mr. Elrington were suitable companions to Sir Edward, who was but just eight and twenty. Belladen was above threescore; Elrington about five and fifty, and appeared still much older from his infirmities, having been rendered for some years unable to move himself

self from one place to another by any means, by the palsy, which first seized his legs, but rising upwards invaded almost every part but his head, which was entirely free from any disorder. He was therefore, though not able to stir, quite capable of conversing, and as he had seen a great deal of the polite world in the former part of his life, and added to a great knowledge of mankind many literary acquisitions, he was a very agreeable companion, notwithstanding the shock which his constitution had received.

As he was very easy in his circumstances, and of a very friendly disposition, he never wanted company, neither did Sir Edward after his first introduction to him by Mr. Belladen want any further invitation, but spent a

great deal of his time with him; for they were equally pleased with each other's company.

Mr. Belladen and his daughter frequently accompanied Sir Edward to Mr. Elrington's, who was very fond of Myra, and thought that her father had discovered an unjust partiality to her brother in the division of his fortune upon his marriage. Young Belladen was never Mr. Elrington's favourite, but the artfulness with which he influenced his father to act unfairly in the distribution of his fortune, rendered him doubly disgusting to the old gentleman.

Harry Belladen did indeed, only in his person, resemble his amiable sister. There was a great external similitude between them, but the personal advantages were rather on Harry's side, for
he

he was one of the handsomest men in the world, except Sir Edward Balchen. His wife also was a very pretty woman, and amiable in her temper: but though she was more regularly beautiful than Myra, she had not that winning softness in her manners, and those captivating graces in her person, which were so eminently conspicuous in Miss Belladen. She was, besides, rendered less pleasing by a kind of cool reserve in her behaviour, especially to her husband, who, as he had not been the man of her choice, had not been able to make the tender impression upon his heart which he wished. Her apparent dislike to him, however, did not affect him, as it would have affected a husband of more delicacy. He had indeed, hardly any notion of that refined pleasure which arises from

conferring happiness on another; if he was easy himself, he troubled his head very little about any other person. He became acquainted with Miss Westbury, as the daughter of a neighbour, and liked her because she was a pretty woman; but he liked her more because her father could give her a large fortune. Money was to him a considerable object, as he was of an ambitious, haughty turn, and loved the most expensive pleasures. Mr. Westbury, the father, who was not a very old man, happening to be of his way of thinking, with regard to the consequence of wealth, refused to part with his daughter, unless his father would make a large settlement upon him out of his estate, for the present, and secure the rest of it to him at his death. To these high terms,

Harry,

Harry, by his insinuating address, prevailed on his father to give his assent.—

In this manner, he had the happiness of becoming the husband of Di Westbury, who, as she knew it would be to no purpose to thwart her father in any thing on which he had set his mind, and had no particular attachment, suffered herself to be married, meerly out of filial obedience, to a man whose person, handsome as it was, she did not, however, find sufficient to make amends for the defects in his disposition.

Harry, as long as he was possessed of his wife's person, very easily consoled himself for not being master of her heart; though, both in public and in private he strove, by a multitude of fond endearments to gain it: but his pride, his avarice, hypocrisy and self-conceit,

conceit, gave her so thorough a disgust to him that she could not always conceal it. Her disgust, the quick-sighted Sir Edward immediately discovered, as they were often at Mr. Belladens: and her behaviour, in consequence of it, though she was no coquette, and had so handsome a fellow for her husband who apparently doated on her, prejudiced him against women in general, and made him more than ever believe, that Mrs. Wentworth only was capable of loving tenderly.

It was only indeed to her husband, that Mrs. Belladen's behaviour was censurable. To her own father, to his father, to her brother, to Miss Belladen, and even to Sir Edward she was gentle, polite and every way agreeable. She had been married about a year and a half,

at

at the time of Sir Edward's coming into H——shire, and had but just lain in of a daughter, to whom she transferred the tenderness which her husband would have gladly received from her, though he made himself tolerably happy without it.

As old Mr. Belladen had learnt from Sir Edward the chief cause of his retiring, he communicated that cause to his daughter; and as his own time was very much taken up with his favourite study, he desired her to use her best endeavours to amuse his friend, while he himself was otherwise engaged. Having no other motive, in making this request, than a real inclination to render his house as agreeable as possible to his guest, and to revive his spirits, which had been, he imagined, greatly lowered
by

by his disappointment; he spoke to his daughter in such a tone, and with such a manner, that she thought it both her duty and delight to obey him.

Myra was of a most benevolent disposition; her gentle heart always compassionated the unhappy and distressed, and she was ever ready to relieve them. With a heart so full of sensibility, so open to pity, so gentle, so tender, she could not but be prepossessed in favour of a man so every way attracting as Sir Edward. His person alone had inspired most women with an inclination for him who had seen it; but his person alone would have had but little effect on Miss Belladen. She had a taste for his conversation, and was charmed with it. She felt compassion for him, because she thought him unhappy, and

and she had received orders from her father to endeavour to make him otherwise: was she not, therefore, in a critical situation? To render it still more critical, her heart was quite disengaged. She had rejected the matrimonial proposals of several neighbouring gentlemen, because they were greatly her inferiors in understanding, and extremely disagreeable to her.

Myra, at first, treated her father's guest with a modest freedom; and seemed so desirous to entertain him, that she allured him, in spite of himself, to converse with her upon a variety of subjects. She amazed him with her knowledge and her literary attainments. He was surprized to find a young woman born and bred above seventy miles from London (which place she had never

never seen) so polite, so accomplished, and so able to converse upon almost every topic. Her father, 'tis true, was a very sensible man, and Mr. Elrington, their nearest neighbour and friend, had taken some pains to inform and improve her mind: and she now and then spent a week or two with a Mrs. Gilbert, a very agreeable woman, who, in the summer, lived within six miles of them; she had been an intimate friend of the late Mrs. Belladen's, and her husband was a man of fortune.

Miss Belladen, had a sweet, harmonious voice, but as there never had been a master of eminence in that part of the country, she had very little skill in music, and only sung a few ballads which she picked up, with a wild kind of melody. She had been taught a
few

few lessons on an harpsichord which had been her mother's, but she touched the keys as if she knew nothing of their latent powers.

Sir Edward, who had a delicate musical taste, though he was not a very excellent performer himself, soon discovered Myra's deficiencies, and upon her father's taking notice of them one day, when he had ordered her to play for his amusement, offered to give her all the instruction he was able. He made this offer, at the time, meerly with a design to render her voice and finger still more pleasing; and to amuse himself in correcting her mistakes. His time was not thrown away: he found her a very apt scholar. She soon sung and played in so true a taste, that she gave great satisfaction to her father; she

amused

amused his mind thereby, after he had been abstractedly engaged, and filled the heart of her new master with sensations which he had never felt before for any woman but Mrs. Wentworth; but this change which she had made in him he was unwilling to believe: he was more unwilling to allow the force of her charms. The bare idea of loving a second time, without being as tenderly beloved as his friend Wentworth was, shocked him: and he saw no possibility of being certain that Miss Belladen had a disinterested inclination for him, if appearances on her side should be ever so flattering, as there was so great a disproportion in their fortunes, and rank in life. To marry a woman, meerly because she wished to share his wealth and honours with him, he
could

could not bear the thoughts of taking such a step: for, as he was resolved that nothing should ever fix his passion but the personal and intellectual charms of the lady whom he chose as a partner for life, he was equally resolved that he would himself be preferred for the same attractions, in which he thought he was not deficient, though no man ever had so little vanity, nor so free from the slightest tincture of a coxcomb.

Myra, on the other hand, as soon as she began to find that Sir Edward was the most amiable man whom she had ever seen, scrutinized very deeply into her own words and actions, lest she should inadvertently give him the smallest reason to imagine that he was more agreeable in her eyes than any other person:

person: so afraid was she of encouraging an inclination for a man so every way her superior. Had he been her equal, as he had discovered no particular regard for her, she would, through extreme modesty, rather have died, than have given him the least room to believe that she preferred him to any other gentleman. Full of these sentiments, therefore, she grew more and more circumspect in her behaviour, but was, at the same time, not a little studious to prevent her circumspection from being perceived by Sir Edward, who now began to observe her with very penetrating eyes, and with those eyes, which seldom deceived him, fancied that he saw a change in her behaviour to him. He saw it with concern, and when he saw it, sighed. He was, however, careful
not

not to discover any signs of the most distant inclination for her. She was always lively, easy, and in perpetual good-humour: her face was covered with smiles at his approach—she flew to do every thing he desired—to do every thing which she thought, though undesired, would give him pleasure. This attention and complaisance were, in her opinion, due to him, as he was her father's guest and friend, and required them by the laws of hospitality. If he asked her to play or sing, to walk or to converse, she was all compliance. She caught his taste, imperceptibly, in fingering her harpsichord: her voice rose and fell, was loud and soft, under his direction, and every note she breathed, was intended to give pleasure to his harmonious ear. She accompanied him, at
his

his request, in the garden, or chatted with him in the house, when he was not in a humour to do any thing else.

The orders which Myra had received from her father, to divert Sir Edward's melancholy upon his first coming down, and that melancholy itself which had added an affecting softness to his manly figure, had touched her so sensibly; that she would have been strongly inclined to obey the orders which she had received, unprompted by filial duty.

It may not be improper here to give a more particular description of Sir Edward's person. He was very handsome, and rather tall; but had a masculine gracefulness in his mein, which made him, at first sight, a striking object. His face was oval, and his complexion, when he was in health and spirits,

rits was animated. He had bright brown hair which hung in a very becoming manner over his forehead: his eyes were uncommonly expressive, dark and full of fire: yet, whenever he happened to be under the influence of the tender passions, there was an irresistible softness in them: his nose was in the Græcian style of beauty; his teeth were remarkably white, and his mouth was elegantly formed.

By the familiarity in which he lived with Mr. Belladen and his daughter, Sir Edward, touched as he was with the amiable Myra, could not sometimes bear to avail himself of those innocent freedoms which custom authorizes in such an intimacy between the two sexes: but he availed himself of them with the greatest decency, and the little

VOL. I. C liberties

liberties he took were received by her with such an unaffected modesty, that she appeared in his eyes with a thousand new charms. As her artless loveliness increased upon him, he more than once fancied that if he could gain her gentle heart she would make him a most valuable wife: but, when he considered how exceedingly difficult it would be for him to know whether her consent would be perfectly disinterested, he determined to give up all thoughts of her. The behaviour, indeed, of Mrs. Belladen to her husband did not at all encourage him to hope for Myra's love. He frequently saw them together, and observed that neither his conjugal endearments nor his personal attractions could make the impression upon her which he desired. Fully convinced, therefore, that

no man, could be happy in the marriage state unless he was violently beloved, and that he himself stood no chance to be so beloved, he resolved to leave H——shire in a hurry, and to trust his heart no longer in a place where he thought the preservation of it was so hazardous or uncertain.

In order, however, to try himself first, he affected indifference: he studied to avoid Miss Belladen, he made frequent excursions from the house: he rambled about the fields and woods; and shunned the only object from which he was able to receive any pleasure. Myra felt his absence, but ignorant of the occasion of it, only sighed in secret; but whenever he appeared, all her cheerfulness seemed to return, and she was as assiduous to please him as ever. He was

not, he could not but be sensible of her assiduities, yet though well versed in the arts of the sex, he was induced to impute them to the desire she had to aggrandize herself by his fortune, not to any real affection which she had for his person, or any inclination to promote his felicity. Her personal beauties, however, were so very bewitching, and her manners were so alluring, that he was, sometimes, off his guard. In spite of all his precautions, he now and then, in the midst of a tender air, which she sung in the most moving style, seized her hand, and pressed it tenderly to his bosom, and exclaimed, Oh G—d! what transport! while she, covered with blushes, withdrew it gently, and framed some excuse to quit the room soon afterwards without appearing, too particularly to avoid

avoid him. At other times, when they were walking together, he caught her hand, in the height of an interesting conversation, and putting it through his arm, grasped it with a violence, which would have discovered to any woman less conscious of her own attractions than Miss Bellenden was, that he felt uncommon sensations on her account. Upon these occasions, she with a blush, and a timid smile, endeavoured to make him take notice of an object near them, and thereby disengaged herself from him, without seeming to wish to do so: though he generally detected her design, and in his blunt way called her his pretty, gentle prude, and then, on a sudden, as if recollecting himself, threw her from him, and grew silent and reserved.

Miss Belladen thought this behaviour of Sir Edward's odd; there was only that oddity in it which could be called a fault in him: she imputed it to the disappointment which he had met with, and freely forgave it. His good qualities were so predominate over his imperfections, that it was much easier to love than to hate him. He was benevolent, compassionate and generous: lively and entertaining when in high spirits; and a pleasing melancholy overspread his features, not unbecomingly, in the moments of dejection. In short, as he appeared so amiable to every body, it may readily be conceived how doubly so he was in the eyes of Myra who had actually never been intimately acquainted with a man possessed of such powers to please. She soon discovered
the

the nature of the sentiments which she felt for him, and though she strove against them with all her might, she strove in vain. In his absence, she sometimes flattered herself that she had made a conquest, but when he returned to her, she was but too strongly convinced that she had been mistaken. She then frequently retired to her chamber and bewailed her infelicity in having fixed her inclinations upon the only man whom she had yet met with, entirely agreeable, and on whom she could not prudently fix them. To his large estate, to his rank in life, she had no reasonable pretensions: she therefore made use of every method to subdue her passion while it was in its infancy, and before it grew too powerful to be resisted. But this was a task more diffi-

cult to be performed than she imagined it would have been.

During the latter part of Sir Edward's stay at Mr. Belladen's, he did not leave Myra much time for reflection, she was rarely alone till she retired to rest. The charms of her person, the extreme delicacy of her behaviour, her modesty, her mildness and her filial duty, together with her attention to the affairs of the family, in which even the meanest servant loved, and revered her: her excellent understanding, her just taste both in literature and music, joined to the sweetness of her voice and her judicious management of it, compleatly conquered his heart, before he had given himself leave to think about the situation of it. When he did reflect upon its situation, and he could not always hinder his thoughts

thoughts from being employed upon the tenderest of all subjects, he tried to arm himself against his fair adversary's power of pleasing, by assuring himself that he could never possibly be satisfied with regard to the disinterestedness of her carriage to him.

Wavering and irresolute, he sometimes determined to fly from her, but as soon as he had so determined, the sight of her, with all her winning smiles, and attractive graces, deprived him of the power of putting his resolves in execution.

Sometimes by a number of assiduities about her, he endeavoured to find if he could perceive any alteration in her conduct towards him; but though his assiduities made her inexpressibly happy, she concealed her pleasurable feelings

so well that he began actually to fear that he should never make any impression upon her.

Myra was particularly fond of animals: she had a little brown and white spaniel, which, as it had been her mother's, was her favourite. Sir Edward, because she caressed it, took also a very great fancy to it. The poultry, and indeed all the domestic creatures under her care, enjoyed as much happiness as their situation would admit of, for she was uncommonly humane in her disposition. Often did Sir Edward surprize her feeding her dumb companions, surrounded by them all, and often did he see three or four of the feathered ones flying upon her to express their gratitude for her care of them. On those occasions he stood at a distance, and with
unspeakable

unspeakable delight observed her every motion. Frequently did he gently snatch Fidele from the arms of his mistress, to place him in his own, in which he was so patted and stroked that the grateful dog became quite fond of him also, and followed him wherever he went.

Sitting one day, on a bench in the garden near her, Fidele, after having looked at them both earnestly, for some time, jumped first into Myra's lap and then into Sir Edward's. He was pleased at this pretty action, and said to her, while he fondled it, Fidele is a sensible affectionate creature, he sees that I love him, and he tries to make me some return. How much more grateful are these animals, than those who pretend to be so much superior to them, by their

reason? Instinct certainly is reason to them, and a far surer guide, as they are rarely deceived by it: whereas we, with all our boasted reason, cannot tell whether we are loved or hated, nor distinguish our friends from our enemies.

And would you then, said Miss Belladen, stroking Fidele's head as he lay in Sir Edward's lap, part with the noblest gift of Heaven, to be only possessed of the faculties of this poor animal?

Yes, I would by H——n, replied Sir Edward, laying his hand on hers and looking earnestly at her, could I, thereby, be certain whether the person by whom I wish to be preferred to all the world, beholds me in the same light as I do her.

Myra

Myra blushed, but immediately conjecturing that this reflection must have arisen from his remembrance of the lady whom he had long loved, she checked herself, withdrew her hand, and turned the conversation to something less interesting.

Miss Belladen lived in great friendship with her brother, though from the justness of her way of thinking, she could not approve of the maxims by which he regulated his life. She even loved her sister entirely, and doated on their little daughter. She was now and then drawn into long conversations with Sir Edward concerning her sister's indifference to her husband, which was so very apparent to every body, that the baronet's intimacy with the family, with his utter abhorrence of that cool reserve

reserve in a woman, especially towards him to whom she ought to be so tenderly attached, made him almost insensibly take notice of it. I am absolutely surprized, said he to Myra, one day, and astonished, that any woman can be guilty of what seems to me a greater crime than any of which the sex are accused, I mean, the marrying a man not for affection but interest. Such women are also guilty of the extremest folly, for they are as miserable as their husbands. When two people come together, with meerly lucrative views, without the least prospect of mutual felicity, they are indeed in my opinion, worse than foolish; they are criminal. We meet with vexations and disappointments enough in life, undeserved, we need not take pains to bring them upon ourselves. But

But why, said Miss Belladen, are you so severe, and chiefly upon the women? Are not the men equally to blame in such cases? Why do they marry women who do not freely chuse them? A woman may perhaps be so circumstanced, that she cannot with prudence act in direct disobedience to the commands of her parents: but such blind obedience is scarce ever required from a man: let my brother therefore bare some part of the blame, since he might have easily perceived whether he was beloved or not.

Not so easily, not so easily, madam, replied Sir Edward: on the contrary, continued he, looking stedfastly at her, it is the most difficult thing in the world for a man to know whether a woman loves him: and what man can be really happy,

happy, without being the joy, the pride, the delight of his mistress's heart? Oh! how I detest and abhor those lukewarm women! Rather than tie myself to a girl till I was absolutely sure of her heart, I would suffer the most exquisite torments, for I am persuaded that no torments upon earth can equal the pangs of unreturned love.

Poor Myra felt but too forcibly the truth of the latter part of Sir Edward's vehement assertion: it called up blushes in her cheeks which she wished to conceal: they were, indeed, not at that instant perceived by him, for he had worked up his spirits to such a pitch, that he strided up and down the walk they were in, and seemed to be agitated to a violent degree.

The

The gentle Myra, as soon as she had in some measure recovered from the confusion, which her own guilty conscience had occasioned, began to consider that she was both unobserved and unthought of by Sir Edward, and that the remembrance of Mrs. Wentworth had caused the emotions which he discovered. This in a moment, banished all her fears, and in their stead, the tenderest pity took possession of her bosom. She sighed, involuntarily, as she looked at him, and wondered how it was possible for any woman not to adore so amiable a man.

While she was thus lost in thought, he stopped on a sudden, and perceiving her eyes fixed on him with an unusual degree of softness in them, they communicated, at the same instant, a pleasing

ing sensation to his heart. He seized her hand, and pressing it between his, asked her bluntly what she was thinking of. This threw her into no small confusion, but dreading above all things, a discovery of her secret thoughts, she withdrew her hand in a hurry, and with an uncommon presence of mind replied, smiling, I was thinking, Sir Edward, and not without some sort of compassion for them, what a bustle poor weak women sometimes make in the hearts of men, who, by their superior strength of understanding, and improved education, are furnished with infinitely more powers to resist the tender passions than the adversaries of whom they so frequently complain.

As this speech of Myra's bordered a little upon raillery, and as Sir Edward's
present

present situation could but ill bear it, he grew rather out of humour with her; who, inwardly grieved that she had been forced to make use of so ill-natured an expedient to conceal her real sentiments, left him directly, and in her own apartment reflected upon the uneasiness which she had given to him, against her will, with tears. But dear as he was now become to her, she would have almost suffered any thing rather than have appeared so deeply prejudiced in his favour.

Sir Edward, who, notwithstanding his diffidence about his own attractions, had sometimes fancied that Miss Belladen beheld him not with total indifference, now was fully convinced that he was her aversion, and that she even laughed at his disquietudes. This conviction.

viction was attended with many a heart-felt pang: for he, every moment, found new beauties both in her person, and her conversation. He was at a loss how to account for her aversion to him: he could not tell to what he should attribute it. Among the several gentlemen whom she saw at her father's, and at Mr. Elrington's, though some of them had endeavoured to make themselves agreeable to her, he had not observed that she paid a particular attention to any one of them. She received all their civilities alike, and made no distinction which he could discover. But, lest he might have overlooked so interesting a circumstance, he, one day in conversation with Mr. Elrington, about Mr. Belladen's family, took occasion to praise
his

his daughter, and asked that gentleman if she had encouraged any lovers.

I know of none, said Mr. Elrington; Myra is a most amiable girl, and if you want a wife, Sir Edward, you cannot, I think, do better than take her yourself.

Sir Edward, shocked and surprized at this proposal, and afraid that his inclination for her should be detected, cried, with a kind of affected indignation, I marry Myra Belladen? How came you to think of such a thing? What is she to me?

I could not tell, replied the old gentleman composedly, but, that from the earnestness of your enquiries about her you might have been struck with her good qualities. You must, therefore not wonder that I answered you so freely. But if you do not fancy her,

Heaven

Heaven forbid I should say any thing to persuade you against your inclination. I am no match-maker Sir Edward; to that character I have ever had a particular dislike.

Sir Edward, whose conscience pleaded guilty, could not honestly make the reply he wished, and was therefore silent upon that subject.

While he was thus careful to hide from every body what passed in his heart, Myra was in a far more disagreeable situation: for though Sir Edward had so freely declared his having no thoughts of her to Mr. Elrington, it was but too plain to himself that he thought of nothing else: in this situation he had not the power to remove himself from her presence, and thereby avoid her company. By continuing
however

however where he was, his uneasinesses were increased, nor were hers lessened: for she could not help regarding him with less and less indifference. The difficulties indeed which she encountered, in trying to suppress every mark of her esteem were so great, that she was determined to ask her father's leave to pay a visit to Mrs. Gilbert. This step of hers confirmed all Sir Edward's conjectures, and left him no room to question her dislike to him. To save her the trouble, therefore, of quitting her father's house in order to avoid his company, he resolved to go to London.

When he acquainted Mr. Belladen with his resolutions, his daughter was present, and changed from a death-like pale to a rosy red: but as Sir Edward did not, at that time, imagine that she
would

would be affected with any of his movements, he had not observed this alteration in her countenance.

Mr. Elrington, who loved his company extremely, shewed great reluctance at parting with him, and made him promise to return soon, and spend some time with him. Sir Edward promised to comply with his friend's request, but determined to get the better of his passion for his fair neighbour, before he ventured to return.

Vain are the determinations of men: especially of men in love. Every mile he travelled from Mr. Belladen's filled him with regret, and it was the shame only of appearing irresolute which prevented him from changing the course of his journey. Besides, he flattered himself, as he rolled along, that by shifting

shifting the scene, keeping a variety of company, and entering into the public diversions, as the Winter-season was just begun, he should drive Miss Belladen's image from his mind; that he should at least, by a life of dissipation, remove ideas which were fatal to his peace.

These reflections gave alacrity to his measures, and made him hasten the progress of his post-chaise.

Myra, after his departure, endeavoured to subdue every prejudice which she had entertained to his advantage. This task she would have found no easy one, if she had only had her own opinion to combat with: it was rendered still more difficult, because her father, Mr. Elrington, every person who had ever seen him; all their servants; every neighbour and inhabitant near them; all the lower

fort, of whom numbers had received glaring proofs of his benevolence and humanity, were full of his praises. Even Harry Belladen and his wife freely declared that there was something in Sir Edward Balchen's figure and manner, uncommonly striking, and agreeable. Miss Belladen, therefore, who was neither able to lessen the praises which she heard, nor desirous to diminish them, could only hear them in silence, which exactly suited the melancholy situation of her mind, though she endeavoured, as much as she possibly could, to hinder its being perceived in company. She was, indeed, possessed of such remarkable prudence, that though nothing gave her so much pleasure as the remembrance of the books which they had read together, the pieces of music and the songs
which

which were particularly agreeable to his taste, and the walks in the garden which he preferred to all others, yet she strove to suppress the rising pleasure, by seeking a new train of amusements, none of which, however, perfectly answered the end for which she sought them; so truly painful was the task which she had undertaken.

While Miss Belladen was thus doing violence to her inclination in H——shire, Sir Edward hurried about from place to place in London, in order to banish reflection, and drive her from his thoughts.

In a short time after he was so employed, but unsuccessfully, a Mr. Mackworth, the son of a friend of Mr. Elrington's became acquainted with Mr. Belladen, and was soon struck with the

D 2

engaging

engaging person, still more engaging carriage of his daughter: and on her account frequently visited the family. It was not long before he was enamoured with Myra, desperately so, but as he depended on his father who would, he knew, expect a fortune with the lady whom he chose for his wife, he was prevented from paying any serious addresses to Miss Belladen at that time; though a woman whose heart had been entirely disengaged, could have hardly been ignorant of the prepossession which he discovered for her.

Much about this time, Mr. Belladen fell ill. There was at first nothing threatening in his disorder, but in a few weeks it was attended with dangerous prognostics. This alarmed his daughter extremely, and drove all thoughts

thoughts of Sir Edward from her mind. He, on the contrary, could not help thinking of her more and more. He grew absolutely sick of London, and all its amusements. He received no pleasure but in the recollection of the agreeable hours which he had passed with Miss Belladen. Her elegant figure was ever present to his imagination; the melodious sound of her voice was never out of his ears, and he ardently desired to return, that he might again have an opportunity to gaze on her charming form, and to listen to her melting accents. But then, cried he to himself, why did I leave her? Only because I feared her enchanting power over me, and dreaded to lose in her company all command over myself.—Could she have been kept ignorant of my fortune—but even

then she might not, perhaps, have loved me.

Thus was he for some time wavering and undetermined, finding in no place the least satisfaction. At length, he resolved to return to Mr. Belladen's, as he felt that no other situation was likely to afford him the smallest degree of delight. Weary of himself, and no longer able either to procure self-amusement, or to communicate pleasure to others, he ordered his carriage to be prepared for his journey to H——shire.

Just at this juncture he received a letter from Mr. Elrington, the contents of which violently shocked him. He was informed of Mr. Belladen's death, after having been ill a few weeks: and informed likewise, that, to the amazement of every body who knew the affectionate

tionate and dutiful behaviour of his daughter to him, he had left every thing, except five hundred pounds to her, to his son: On which scanty sum, said Mr. Elrington, she cannot possibly subsist, in the way she has been accustomed to, or indeed live like a gentlewoman. I therefore, continued he, made her a proposal to come and be at the head of my family, as my friendship for her was well known to her father, and as my time of life and great infirmities must entirely have removed all objections which delicacy could suggest to her against such a situation. She has freely accepted of my offer, and I am now endeavouring to dissipate the melancholy which her recent loss, and the ill treatment which renders her sorrow more pungent, have occasioned.

Sir Edward felt a thousand different sensations at this unexpected intelligence: but it rather accelerated than retarded his journey, as Mr. Elrington had in his letter again pressingly invited him to make his house his own, whenever he chose to reside in H——shire. I will go, I will fly to the relief of this amiable, unfortunate girl, said he, though her father's cruel treatment in leaving her so little will more and more prevent me from touching her heart in the manner I so much wished to do. The more dependent she is, the more tempting will such a fortune as mine appear to her. Oh! that it was possible for her to view me in the same dependent state she now is! I should then have a fair opportunity to try whether I could touch her gentle bosom: and if I was
happy

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 57

happy enough to inspire her with a passion for me, I should have the additional transport to know that it was pure and disinterested.

With his head and heart full of these sentiments and sensations, Sir Edward arrived at Mr. Elrington's, who welcomed him with the utmost hospitality and friendship, and, before he introduced him to Miss Belladen, acquainted him with every particular relating to her father's strange partiality in favour of his son. Mrs. Belladen, continued he, has expressed great regard for poor Myra, and intreated her earnestly to live with her, but I have persuaded her not to lay herself under any obligations, if she could possibly avoid them, to a brother who has shewed himself to be so unworthy an object, and so little

D 5 deserving.

deserving of that appellation. Live well with your brother and his family, said I to her, to all outward appearance, but do not be obliged to him or them, my dear, lest you meet with worse treatment.

Sir Edward could scarce hear Mr. Elrington with patience upon a subject which excited his utmost indignation against Harry Belladen, but he as warmly commended his proper advice to Myra, and his kind reception of her into his family, in which she would be treated with as much respect and esteem, as if she had been his own daughter.

If his indignation was thus excited before he saw her, what did he feel when she first came down to him? Her dejected air, together with her mournful dress, heightened the charms of her person,

person, as it set off the loveliness of her complexion, and diffused a pleasing softness over her whole figure. A thousand new, and nameless graces appeared in her, to the enamoured eyes of Sir Edward which, exclusive of the extreme compassion which he felt for her, animated him to employ all the assiduity he was capable of to cheer her drooping spirits, and disperse the gloom which seemed to have taken possession of her afflicted mind.

His sudden and unexpected arrival, and the tender pity in his looks and behaviour towards her, awakened every feeling in his favour which, during his absence, she had been attempting to stifle, at least, if she could not totally conquer it. She could not immediately recover from her surprize; nor could

she, so great was her grief renewed at the sight of him who had known her in more prosperous times, be so much on her guard as she wished to be. Nothing, indeed, appeared in the least flattering in her carriage to him, but yet she would gladly have behaved with more fortitude, and not have sunk into a sorrow which gave her, she thought, too tender, too affecting an air; for her tears flowed afresh at his return. However, though that return filled her with a secret delight, her grief and confusion entirely concealed it from Sir Edward.

As for him, more sensibly touched than ever, with the charms of her person, and enraptured with the gentle delicacy of her manners, he scarce ever quitted her when she was below stairs, and left nothing undone to amuse her
mind,

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 61

mind, and to divert her attention from the gloomy and disagreeable scenes which had so lately engrossed it.

This very minute attention both charmed and distressed her at the same time, as it revived and increased all her former sentiments for him. Even though she was more sensible than ever how improper the indulgence of them was, she found it more painful and difficult to suppress them.

After having been at Mr. Elrington's two days, he came to him one morning, when he was alone, and inveighed bitterly against the cruel usage which Miss Belladen had met with. I have so great an esteem for her, continued he, that I wish to make her happier in her circumstances, but it is highly probable that as I am young and unmarried, she
may

may from a point of delicacy refuse assistance of any kind from me; and therefore I beg the favour of you, Mr. Elrington, to inform her, that you will yourself allow her two hundred a year. I will take care to pay it to you: do you only acknowledge yourself to be the giver of it.

Mr. Elrington was a good deal startled at this request of Sir Edward's, and could not help, at the same time, admiring his generosity, which he almost believed could not flow from any evil intentions, as he was so desirous for the concealment of it; but yet he could not hinder himself from entertaining a few doubts, nor was he at all pleased to take upon himself the merit of an action to which he was not entitled.

I applaud

I applaud your humanity, my dear Sir Edward, said he, if you are urged by no other motive: but if you harbour any illicit designs against this worthy girl, and imagine, by this liberal offer, to avail yourself of her esteem, I give you my word and honour, that I will have nothing to do in the affair.

Sir Edward felt a little confused at this reply of Mr. Elrington's, but, in order to hide his confusion, fell into the other extreme. With a haughtiness in his aspect, and a warmth in his speech, which he immediately assumed, Have I not already told you, cried he unusually eager, that I have no design upon Myra, no inclination for her? But, continued he, after a little hesitation, awkward enough—I cannot see her, my feeling heart will not let me see the deserving child

child of a man whom I once called my friend, exposed to all kinds of dangers, to all kinds of temptations by that very man, by her father, and not attempt to save her, to relieve her: I must assist her: but as my motive can only appear, what it really is, honest compassion, while it is concealed, refuse me not this request: be every way a father to the injured Myra.

He was too much affected to proceed without risking a full discovery of his sentiments. He turned abruptly from Mr. Elrington to hide his emotion.

Mr. Elrington, after a moment's deliberation, told him that he would, to oblige him, and to serve Miss Belladen agree to what he desired, but conditionally: If, said he, Miss Belladen receives two hundred a year from my hands, she
will,

will, I doubt, grow suspicious, from the largeness of the benefaction: with your leave, therefore, I will pay her one only; and that she may not lose the benefit of your friendly intentions, improve the other in the best manner I am able for her.

Do so, my dear Elrington, replied Sir Edward, and let nothing force this secret from your breast.

When Sir Edward had thus, in some measure, provided for the mistress of his heart, he redoubled his assiduities and attentions to make her in every shape happy, and to inspire her with a passion as warm, as tender as his own.

Mr. Elrington, who was, in reality, the friend of Myra, and most kindly supplied the place of a parent to her, being rendered by Sir Edward's uncommon

common generosity, not a little cautious with regard to his charge, watched them both at this interesting period, and, fancying that he discovered in Miss Belladen's looks no sort of aversion to Sir Edward, closeted her one day, and in the most earnest terms intreated her to be upon her guard against a man so very amiable, and consequently so very seducing.

Myra, with the utmost confusion in her air, with her face full of blushes, thanked her worthy friend for his well-meant advice, in expressions which sufficiently convinced him that she highly prized it. Be assured, sir, added she, that I shall follow it exactly.

Nay, my dear, replied the good Mr. Elrington, I don't know whether there is any occasion for this caution--I hope
you

you stand in no need of it: and as for Sir Edward, he has more than once, so very positively asserted, that he has not felt any particular emotions in your favour, that I cannot entertain any suspicions on his account.

This sudden declaration of Sir Edward's sentiments, Myra was not at all prepared to expect from his behaviour to her, and she was hardly able to bear the shock which she received from it; at least, not with that firmness which she would have done, had she been entirely indifferent to him. Her cheeks were more deeply crimsoned; then, in a moment reflecting on the weakness of which she must be guilty, by even appearing to love a man who had professed his indifference for her in such positive terms, the crimson vanished, and a pale

pale hue succeeded. Calling up all her resolution, and again thanking Mr. Elrington for his great goodness to her, she assured him that the extreme distance between her and Sir Edward, which was now become still more conspicuous, had ever, and would ever, she was certain, prevent her from thinking of him in an improper manner. If, sir, continued she, you think it necessary, I will from this hour, behave still more distantly-respectful than I have yet done to him.

By no means, my dear Miss Belladen. There has been no fault in your conduct: to alter it, therefore, would be too remarkable: an easy unaffected carriage to our sex, is the strongest proof of a young woman's innocence. Your behaviour has been so very unexceptionable,

ble, that I don't think it can be mended. I had no such view in mentioning Sir Edward, but only, as he is to me a very desirable and agreeable companion, I, from my partiality to his company might perhaps have thought him more dangerous to a female heart than he really is. However, there is no harm in being upon your guard, and I know you will not take my caution amiss, my dear.

Myra again repeated her acknowledgment to Mr. Elrington for his friendly advice, and quitted the room.

When she retired to her own apartment, a thousand confused ideas filled her mind, and gave her an anxiety which she could no way get rid of. Mr. Elrington's conversation, on recollection, seemed very strange. How came Sir
Edward

Edward to tell him that he did not like her? What occasion had he to mention her at all, in that light to him? These were questions which puzzled her extremely. In short she grew more and more perplexed by thinking on what Mr. Elrington had cautiously communicated to her, and could only resolve at last, to double her reserve to Sir Edward, if his behaviour to her should render such an alteration in her carriage to him necessary: and she soon fancied that she had occasion to act agreeably to her new resolution.

Sir Edward, perceiving that her melancholy did not decrease, availed himself of every method he could think of to amuse her, and to give a turn to her ideas. He played to her on the harpsichord: he read to her, and Mr.

Elrington

Elrington in the evening while she worked, and to herself alone, when she chose to hear him. He walked with her in the garden for hours together, and often asked her to go with him into the fields and woods near them for variety. To these strols she sometimes consented, especially when Mr. Elrington seconded Sir Edward's request, who thought that exercise and a changing of the scene would probably contribute to prevent her from dwelling too much on her late heavy loss, and bitter disappointment.

In these walks Sir Edward frequently wrapped her arm in his, and held her hand in spite of her endeavours to remove it. He was remarkably solicitous about her health, and when she was weary or indisposed, busied himself in relieving

relieving her with so much tenderness, that if she never had felt any inclination for him before, this extreme attention to promote her happiness, must have had some effect upon her. Imagine then how much she suffered by making continual efforts to subdue a passion, for a passion it certainly was, which his carriage to her every moment tended to increase.

Whenever they came to a stile, or a gate in their walks, he lifted her over with so much delicacy, accompanied with so much affection, that she could scarcely suppress a sigh which every now and then found its way from her gentle heart. He, who was too attentive to let the least motion escape him, sometimes fancied that she was touched with his assiduous desire to please; but when-

ever

ever she felt herself giving way to a softness which possessed her whole soul, the recollection of what Mr. Elrington had told her, brought back her affected indifference, and obliged her lover to despair of success.

As soon as Sir Edward had paid into Mr. Elrington's hands the first quarter of the annuity for Miss Belladen's use, that gentleman took an opportunity to let her know his intention, though it was with the greatest reluctance that he fathered the generosity of another.

Myra, astonished, and overwhelmed with gratitude, received this unexpected proof of Mr. Elrington's friendship for her; with tears of acknowledgment, and upon quitting him with her heart full, and her eyes inflamed, was met by Sir Edward, who taking hold of her

VOL. I. E hand,

hand, asked her immediately, pressing it, while he asked her, what new affliction had disquieted her.

Overflowing with the most grateful sentiments in favour of Mr. Elrington's bounty to her, she at once told him, in the strongest terms, the deep sense which she had of the favour just conferred upon her; while her eyes still confirmed the feelings of her heart. In large drops fell the tears upon that hand which Sir Edward detained in his, and melted him to the soul: but he was extremely chagrined to find that he had lost the merit of an action which so sensibly affected her, and he would have almost given any thing that he had not concealed this mark of his generosity. He longed to discover the source from which the favours flowed, for
which

which her gentle heart was so full of gratitude, but the fear of her rejecting them when she knew by whom they were conferred, still made him lock up the secret in his breast. Inconceivable transport, however, he felt, on finding her so well pleased with what he had done. I rejoice in this goodness of old Elrington's, my dear Miss Belladen, said he warmly: I am delighted with every thing that has the least tendency to promote your happiness. But why do you thus weep? Why stream these tears? continued he, kissing them off the hand which he held in his: they are too precious to flow for this old man.

I owe every thing to Mr. Elrington, sir, said Myra blushing, and hastily withdrawing her hand; and I cannot be too sensible of his kindness to me.

With these words she left Sir Edward, whose eyes followed her, till he was become almost petrified upon the spot on which he stood. He then returned to Mr. Elrington, but with an air so abstracted that Mr. Elrington asked him if he was ill; telling him that he had presented the desired sum to Miss Belladen, and describing her behaviour.

I know it all, I know it all, replied Sir Edward, throwing himself into a chair; I met Myra just now, and shall be happy, if I have any way contributed to make her so.

He then directly gave a turn to the conversation.

Mr. Mackworth, who has already been mentioned, as an admirer of Miss Belladen, and who was also a neighbour of Mr. Elrington's, now began to renew

his

his visits to that gentleman, which he had declined on account of Mr. Belladen's death, supposing that it would not be agreeable to his daughter to see much company: though the manner in which her father had left her, was still a stronger check to his hopes. Yet, so much was he charmed with her, that he had not power to conquer his inclination.

Sir Edward soon saw Mr. Mackworth's passion for Myra, (for who is so quick-sighted as a lover?) but did not at first know whether he ought to be alarmed about him, or not:—Myra behaved so equally to both, bating the superior respect which she paid to Sir Edward, that he could not tell whether Mackworth was favoured by her.

Mackworth, though not so handsome as Sir Edward, was agreeable and well-bred, and paid Miss Belladen all the respectful deference which she could desire in a lover: but as she had no design to return his passion, and knew besides that he had a father who, she thought, would certainly disapprove of her, she would not have given him the slightest encouragement if she had never seen Sir Edward. But his respect, his timidity, and the anxiety which he could not help discovering, moved her pity, though he could not touch her heart. Naturally of a gentle and compassionate disposition, she always felt for the woes of others, and particularly for those occasioned by love, as she suffered so extremely herself, on that account. This disposition prompted her to behave in a mild

mild and obliging manner to him, and that behaviour of hers flattered him that she was beginning to have an inclination for him.

Flushed with these hopes, Mackworth ventured to mention his passion to Mr. Elrington, and to beg his assistance in rendering it successful.

You amaze me, Mackworth, said Mr. Elrington, are you not acquainted with the very small sum which Mr. Belladen bequeathed to his daughter?

I am, sir, acquainted with it, replied Mr. Mackworth, but I do not therefore think her less agreeable. On the contrary, she appears in my eyes a still higher character, because she bears this disappointment with such patience and resignation: and as she is circumstanced, I think she is more than ever in want of a protector.

You

You are in the right, my friend, said Mr. Elrington, I do not think it possible for a young woman to conduct herself with more fortitude and propriety than Miss Belladen does, upon so trying an occasion. But will your father ever consent to your taking a wife, with so small a fortune? And if he should consent, have you gained her affections?

I shall, I think, act dishonourably, replied he, to endeavour to gain her affections before I can make her a proper proposal with my father's approbation. How to procure that, disturbs me, I confess, beyond measure. But you, sir, are his friend; you are no stranger to the merits of the charming Myra, will you not plead in my behalf to my father, and tell him that all my happiness depends upon my union with this deserving girl?

Mr.

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 81

Mr. Elrington, who, though he was greatly pleased with the care which Miss Belladen took of himself and his family, which never had been so properly looked after since he grew so infirm and unable to superintend it, would have thought it criminal in him to hinder her from being well married, meerly from selfish considerations; after having again asked Mackworth if he imagined that Myra would not be averse, in case his father made no objection to her, and having received for answer, that he flattered himself with being not in the least disagreeable to her, told him that he would think of the affair.

The methods necessary to be taken, in order to move the heart of an old man but too much corrupted by avarice, so entirely engrossed Mr. Elrington's
E 5 attention,

attention, that Sir Edward took notice of his unusual taciturnity, when they were again together by themselves, and asked him what had occasioned it,

As Mr. Elrington had a high opinion of the baronet's sagacity, and quickness of apprehension, he freely told him the whole matter upon which he was ruminating, and as freely consulted him how to proceed.

Sir Edward started, as if awaked from a dream, at such a request, and replied with great coolness, You cannot, Mr. Elrington, apply to a more improper person upon this occasion. He then sat in a kind of stiff silence for some time: at last, recovering himself, Do you really believe, continued he bluntly, that Myra loves young Mackworth?

I can

I can tell you no more than what he has told me, said Mr. Elrington, which is, that he believes she has no aversion to him.

Oh, she has no aversion to him! cried Sir Edward, repeating his friend's words, stifling a sigh just ready to burst from him; bounding from his chair, he walked hastily up and down the room, and then went into the garden, in which he was alone above half an hour before he could bring himself to think calmly upon a subject so fatal to his happiness.

No wonder, said he, in a soliloquy, that all my assiduities, all my endeavours to please her have proved ineffectual, if she is prepossessed in favour of another, and if—(after a long pause) she can never be happy with me!—Why

must I wish to prevent her from being happy with this Mackworth, who, if he is sensible of her merit—poor girl! she has already suffered enough: I cannot love her truly, and wish to see her wretched.—This then was the cause of all her coolness, of all those sudden starts of indifference which often seized her in the midst of my tenderness for her. But I will shew that I love her still more fondly, by endeavouring to promote her felicity at the expence of my own.

After about half a dozen hasty strides, in consequence of this resolution, he returned to Mr. Elrington, whom he found in the same situation; a situation he could seldom leave, but when his servants carried him to his closet or his bed:

bed: or when, in very fine weather, they wheeled him into the garden.

With a very serious aspect, but with a spirited tone, What fortune, Mr. Ellington, said he, do you think will satisfy old Mackworth?

I really don't know, but I suppose, between two and three thousand pounds will be the least.

Well—I have so great an esteem for Miss Belladen, on account of the intimacy which has subsisted between her family and mine, that I will make up that sum: but don't tell Myra, till you hear how she receives Mackworth's offers. Let him first make his passion known to her: If she loves him, the money shall not be wanting to compleat their happiness.

You

You are an excellent young man, cried Mr. Elrington, amazed at his generosity, which proceeded he thought, entirely from the goodness of his heart; I will send to my friend directly, and also persuade Miss Belladen to listen to his addresses; as he has a good character; by this unexampled generosity of yours they may, perhaps, be happily settled for life.

And why persuade her to listen to him? interrupted Sir Edward, with an impatience in his looks and gestures which he could not conceal; why, for God's sake, need you make use of persuasion? Let her love him or not, just as it happens, if there is the least compulsion, I tell you very plainly sir, I will have nothing at all to do with it.

With

With these words he walked away in a hurry, while Mr. Elrington looked after him, astonished: as his whole behaviour had appeared very extraordinary to him.

When Sir Edward retired again to his own thoughts, they were not of the most pleasing kind: for as he had for some time flattered himself with the hopes of being happy in the possession of Miss Belladen's heart, this disappointment was almost insupportable. He flung himself upon one of the seats in the garden, regardless of the weather which was both damp and cold, and thereby not consulting his health. Leaning his head upon his hand he began to lament his ill-fortune, in having fixed his inclination only on women whose affections were pre-engaged,

Myra,

Myra, totally ignorant of all that had passed relating to her, as she returned to the house, passed by Sir Edward.— In passing, she could not see him sitting in so dejected an attitude, without opening her lips. She approached him with that winning gentleness in her air, and that engaging sweetness in her manner which had so compleatly charmed him, and, softly said, Are you not well, Sir Edward? You certainly run a great risk of catching cold, by sitting thus in so raw a day.

At the silver sound of her melodious voice Sir Edward raised his eyes from the ground (for he did not know that she was so near him) and fixing them steadily on her, My health, Miss Belladen, said he in mournful accents, is of so very little consequence either to myself,

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 89

self, or to any body else, that I really think it beneath my care.

You wrong your friends, extremely, replied she, with faltering tones, to imagine that they regard you with so much indifference: and though, continued she, with a tenderness which she endeavoured to restrain, I have no pretence to rank myself among the number of those who have a right to style themselves your friends, yet I cannot let you sit here to endanger your health without trying, at least, to persuade you to remove.

And so you think you can persuade me to any thing? said he, with a forced smile. You are conscious of your power, and sport with it, added he sighing.

These few words were uttered with a greater severity of aspect than he had
ever

ever assumed, in speaking to her. She was alarmed: she blushed: she trembled: she was fearful of having offended, and with a slow, lingering, reluctant pace was retreating from him when, perceiving what he said had made her uneasy, he seized her by the hand, Come, Miss Belladen, I will once believe you so much my friend as to wish me health and happiness, though you cannot give me the latter. I will go in with you, my sweet girl; since you seem to desire I would. There is a pleasure, however, in being kindly treated by those who have a considerable influence over us.

Myra, who knew not very well in what sense to take these expressions, and afraid to discover her sensations, remained silent, as he walked by her side.

side, while he held her hand which she did not attempt to take from him. She was, indeed, so entirely confused that she had scarce strength to stir.

Sir Edward saw, and felt her confusion; and had he not just before had reason to believe that she had no dislike to Mackworth, he would have been almost certain that he was far from being indifferent to her. His distress therefore now was doubled: though at the same time a melancholy kind of satisfaction arose from it.

After they had walked for some minutes in this awkward manner, I firmly believe, Miss Belladen, said he, that you are yourself not well; he looked earnestly at her when he said so, and pressed her hand.

Poor

Poor Myra was too much affected to return an answer to so tender an observation. Her concern at seeing him so careless about his health: the severity of his tone in first speaking to her, and his subsequent inquietude concerning her, touched her so sensibly, that it nearly deprived her of speech and motion. Her trembling limbs were hardly able to support her. With her emotions Sir Edward's concern and affection increased.

You are ill, I am assured, cried he anxiously, very ill: lean on me, continued he, putting her arm through his, and tell me whence arises this disorder.

I cannot tell, replied the still trembling Myra, glad however, to find that her confusion was mistaken for indisposition, and willing to have it attributed.

tributed to any cause but the real one.

My dearest girl, said Sir Edward, forgetting for a moment, that she was going to be married to Mackworth, and straining her to his bosom, what shall I say? What shall I do to relieve you? What is your uneasiness? Where is your pain? Believe me, Myra, I would give my life to ensure the happiness of yours.

This was too much for poor Myra. She could no longer sustain the various sensations which she felt: she was no longer able to bear up against the intoxicating tenderness of the man whom she adored. She knew not what to say; she knew not how to conceal her feelings. She was quite overcome, and would certainly have fainted in his arms, if

if a shower of tears had not relieved her full heart. To no purpose did he several times urge her to acquaint him with the cause of this fresh affliction: in vain did he pressingly importune her to unfold the secrets of her grieved bosom to him, and repeatedly assure her that he would omit nothing in order to administer relief to her. She only replied with a hearty sigh, and with a look so languishing that it touched him to the soul.

Recollecting at once that her uncertainty with regard to Mackworth must have occasioned these emotions, and that bashfulness and timidity had tied up her tongue, he suddenly quitted her hand, and said with a countenance in which indifference seemed to succeed tenderness, Make yourself easy, Miss

Belladen,

Belladen, every thing shall be accommodated to your satisfaction.

The cool reserve with which he uttered these words, and the immediate removal of his arm, stupified her with amazement: this sudden alteration in him froze her to death. More and more confounded and disappointed as she was, his indifference, however, recovered her from the softness into which she was sinking. As they approached the house she felt her spirits return, but with her spirits, her sorrow, her distress also returned: yet was not that passion, which was now become fatal to her repose, one moment banished thereby from her breast. To compleat her anxious embarrassment, Mr. Elrington, hoping to make her happy, had sent for Mr. Mackworth, and informed him that

Miss

Miss Belladen had a friend who would make her fortune suitable to his father's wishes.

This information gave young Mackworth the most sincere satisfaction. He soon came, and explained himself to Myra, whose heart was so attached to Sir Edward, that she could not listen to the addresses of another. She therefore told him with great politeness that the smallness of her fortune rendered her a very improper person to be related to his family, and intreated him not to think of an alliance which must be so disagreeable to his father.

Mackworth, imagining that she had no other objection to him, told her that if she would but condescend to accept of his hand, he should be happy: tho' she could not but be sensible, he added,
that

that the want of fortune would be no obstacle; yet, if his father should think it any, that obstacle would be easily obviated, as she knew that her friend had offered to remove all difficulties of that kind.

Myra, astonished, could not at all comprehend his meaning, but when he had communicated what Mr. Elrington had told him, she thought nobody but himself could be that generous friend; yet, utterly unable to love any man but Sir Edward, and determined not to accept of one whom she could not love, she peremptorily informed him, that she found herself not in the least inclined to change her situation, and again intreated him not to persist in requesting what she must, in justice to him and to herself, absolutely refuse.

After so positive a denial, Mackworth could not well press his suit any farther, but acquainted Mr. Elrington with the greatest concern, with his reception from Miss Belladen.

Mr. Elrington, not at all sorry to find that Myra was not disposed to leave him, unless she could thereby increase her felicity, said all that he could to console Mackworth upon such an occasion, who soon went away.

When Mr. Elrington saw Miss Belladen by herself, after the departure of her rejected lover, she freely told him all that had passed between that young gentleman and herself, and concluded in this manner: Were I, sir, disposed towards him, as I am not, what could he mean by saying that I had a friend who would supply my want of fortune?

tune? Surely he talked in a strange way.

Not at all, my dear, replied Mr. Elrington, for (though it is to be a great secret) I was commissioned by Sir Edward Balchen to advance, from him, any sum as far as two or three thousand pounds, to make you happy with a deserving man whom you could love.

Sir Edward Balchen! cried the astonished Myra, blushing like scarlet, and lifting up her hands and eyes; what have I done to deserve so much generosity from him?

His regard for the friendship between your families, my dear, said Mr. Elrington, added to his approbation of your becoming fortitude, and patient submission to the decrees of Providence, made him desirous of contributing to-

wards settling you to your satisfaction: but as the young gentleman has not happened to please, Sir Edward would, I believe, chuse to have his intentions concealed.

Myra was too much struck with a proceeding so uncommon to make a reply, but when she retired, a thousand perplexities arose in her mind. The bare desire of Sir Edward to promote her marriage, by presenting her with a fortune, discovered, she thought, in plain terms, an inclination to get rid of her. While her gratitude was therefore excited by his liberality, she was considerably hurt by having reason to believe that he never had any particular attachment to her. A thousand times did she call herself to a severe account for having encouraged flattering hopes, and
yet

yet she could not help thinking in the midst of her self-accusations, that the singularity of his behaviour had been sufficient to nourish them in her breast.

After a long debate with herself, in which she exceedingly condemned her own conduct, and in which she loaded herself with degrading appellations for having bestowed a single thought on a man so every way her superior, she concluded, that her disappointment arose from her ignorance of the manners of the gay men of the world, who are accustomed to treat most women with unmeaning gallantry; and reproached herself for having attributed Sir Edward's assiduities about her to any thing more, and determined her for the future to receive them, as they were offered, with the greatest indifference. She also

resolved to be as little alone with him as possible, and only lamented her too exquisite sensibility. She could not, however, absolutely consider herself in a blameable light, for while she was distressed in feeling the force of Sir Edward's amiable attractions, she would have been likewise grieved not to have found herself touched with his generous proceedings towards her.

The resolution which she had formed, she had soon an opportunity to put in practice. Sir Edward, delighted to hear from Mr. Elrington that she had rejected Mackworth, received her when they met at dinner with an unusual complaisance in his manner, and a more than ordinary softness in his eyes. He was more chearful, more lively and full of humour than she had ever seen him.

He

He laughed, he chatted, he told drole stories, and diverted Mr. Elrington beyond measure. Even Myra, though not in the least in spirits, could not refrain from smiling at the entertaining turn which he gave to the most trivial things: but her smiles were fugitive, they did not last long, they were frequently interrupted and succeeded by a sigh, which, unable to suppress, she endeavoured to stifle in a cough. By her frequent endeavours, however, to stifle her sighs, Sir Edward, who was all observation, became alarmed. She had never been perfectly in health since the loss of her father, and was, of late, much paler than usual. He began therefore to fear that she might be going into a consumption.

This

This conjecture operating strongly with his fears, put an instantaneous stop to his mirth; and he applied himself so entirely to her, that Mr. Elrington who had but observed his general behaviour before, now thought that there was something too- soothing and affecting in his carriage to a woman for whom he had so positively declared that he felt no prepossession. Mr. Elrington also observed that Miss Belladen rather appeared at a loss, and somewhat confused at it. In order therefore to relieve her from her embarrassment, he desired her to favour him with a lesson upon the harpsichord.

And a song too, my dear Miss Belladen, added Sir Edward.

Myra, never less capable of obliging, though never more willing, as she thought that

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 105

that she owed more to Sir Edward, for his intended generosity, than she could possibly pay him, rose up immediately, and went to reach her music-book.

Sir Edward, though in general, rather disposed to be indolent, flew to prevent her. A little respectful compliment which she paid him upon his offered assistance, partly intended as a mark of her gratitude, and partly designed to oblige him to a more distant behaviour to her, seemed to disconcert him.

Good God! my dear Myra, cried he, tenderly to her, taking her by both hands and seating her at the harpsichord; why this ceremony to me, who am entirely the obliged person, whenever you are kind enough to accept of my services?

She blushed, but made no reply. She played her concerto with a visible tremor to Sir Edward, who hung over her, but forbore to correct two or three little mistakes which she committed, through the agitation of her spirits, and which did not escape even the less critical ear of Mr. Elrington.

She sung the first song which appeared upon the opening of her book: it was a plaintive one: the little alteration in her voice, occasioned by her emotion, gave a new and uncommon *pathos* to it. Sir Edward was in raptures. He swore that no sounds were ever so heavenly; and that nobody ever sung in a more touching manner. He intreated her to sing the air again.

This intreaty gave her pleasure, but it was a pleasure on which she was afraid

to

to reckon: it was accompanied with a kind of regret which lessened it. However, she complied, and performed it with a still higher degree of excellence, to which Sir Edward's great attention, and warm praises contributed. He was ready to expire in an extacy of delight.

Mr. Elrington, who observed them, thanking her in a manner which signified a dismissal from the harpsichord, she went up stairs, leaving the gentlemen together.

Mr. Elrington's suspicions concerning the impropriety of Sir Edward's inconsistent conduct, were now considerably increased, and he was thinking in what way he should let him know that he disapproved of it, when the baronet, who became restless and unquiet, as

soon as Miss Belladen left the room, soon went out of it, hoping to meet with her in another part of the house: but she eluded his search, by keeping in her own apartment, in which she spent her time, in arming herself against a man who gained every hour upon her more and more.

As a niece of Mr. Elrington's was expected to make him a visit the next day, and pass some weeks with him, Myra, under a pretence of seeing every thing prepared for her reception, did not return till supper was just coming up, and then kept up the same distant respect to Sir Edward, which threw him a good deal out of his play, though he did not in the least lessen his solicitude to please her.

The

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 109

The next morning, when Mr. Elrington and Myra were alone, that worthy man, who had a real esteem for her, thought it quite proper to renew his cautions. He told her once more that Sir Edward had again and again declared that he had no honourable designs upon her; which his offer to settle her with another, he said, fully demonstrated. But I much question, my dear child, added the good old man, whether he has not others of an opposite nature. His behaviour to you is insinuating to the greatest degree, and I much fear that it may make an impression upon you which you will be sorry to have received. I know of no better way to prevent his gaining your favourable opinion by his assiduities, than your considering how very unworthy of it he must render himself

self by the methods which he apparently takes to secure it. However, don't let what I have said, continued he, make you uneasy, (for he saw her much confused :) I would not have you embarrassed by it; you have hitherto conducted yourself with great propriety. A distant, respectful carriage, like that which you assumed last night to Sir Edward, and a general unaffected easy manner, will, I imagine, be most likely to frustrate any evil intentions which he may have formed, if he really has any, because the more indifferent you appear to him, the sooner will he be inclined to quit a pursuit which seems to promise him no success.

END of BOOK I.

THE
HISTORY
OF

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart.

B O O K II.



WHEN Mr. Elrington had made a few friendly apologies for these hints, and had received the grateful thanks of the lady to whom they were addressed, that lady retired, as she expected the return of Sir Edward from the garden every moment.

Miss

Miss Belladen, though she had more than once had suspicions, from the tenderness of Sir Edward's behaviour to her, that he was not so indifferent as she had been taught to believe, was, notwithstanding, shocked to find that the only man on whom she had fixed her heart, was, in every respect, the only one whom she ought to avoid as her greatest enemy: and that her inclination and her duty must be perpetually at variance.

Determined, however, not to give the slightest encouragement to Sir Edward's hopes, whatever she suffered, she set herself about to follow her friend's directions in every respect, being thoroughly convinced of the propriety of them.

Sir Edward, who had flattered himself not a little that her refusal of Mackworth

worth proceeded from a preference which she was beginning to feel for him, was quite astonished, and disappointed at the respectful reserve with which she treated him. From some few observations which he had made upon her manner of receiving his endeavours to please her, he had begun to hope that he might in time touch her heart in the way he so ardently desired: but this sudden, this excessive coolness defeated all his designs as soon as he had formed them, and filled him with a chagrin which he could not disguise.

Things were in this situation when Miss Gilmour arrived at Mr. Elrington's.

This young lady was the daughter of his only sister, for whom he had a great affection, and who had been dead between three and four years. Her father

ther was a gentleman who possessed about four thousand a year, in an adjacent county, and, in crossing the country to spend some time with an old friend, left his daughter with Mr. Elrington till his return.

Charlotte Gilmour had been bred quite in the high style, and was an exceeding fine girl. She was rather inclining to be tall: she had an easy shape, a commanding air, and a brilliant complexion. She had large black sparkling eyes, which upon occasion could languish into all the softness imaginable. Her other features were truly beautiful. Her disposition was in general lively; sometimes she discovered a tendency to be thoughtless. She had seen every thing; she had been every where: she was a warm admirer of the pleasures of life,

as she called them, and looked upon herself as going to be absolutely buried at Mr. Elrington's, but a transient view of Sir Edward awaked all her most lively ideas. She took leave therefore of her father with a low curtsy and a smile of satisfaction, which made him perfectly easy at leaving her with her good uncle.

As Mr. Elrington had before transmitted to her an account of Miss Belladen's affairs, and acquainted her in what light he wished to have her regarded in his family, Miss Gilmour received the respect which Myra paid to her with more good-nature and familiarity than she would otherwise have done, but without condescending too much, as she had no small idea of the superiority of her own birth and fortune, and

no disadvantageous one of her own personal accomplishments.

With this very favourable opinion of herself, Miss Gilmour, who had really been very generally admired, had not the least doubt but that she should make a considerable bustle in Sir Edward's heart. Imagine then her astonishment, when she saw that he received all her endeavours to make an impression upon him with an indifference which she had seldom, if ever met with from any man: nor did she immediately perceive that Miss Belladen was the cause of that indifference which so much piqued her vanity and her pride. Her own attractions she deemed sufficient to bear away a heart from most women, and so spiritless a girl as Myra, she thought not capable of inspiring such a charming

ing

ing fellow as Sir Edward with the slightest degree of inclination. ~ Besides, he himself contributed also to encourage the nourishment of this error; for, as he most sincerely loved Myra, and had no intention but to marry her as soon as he could be certain of her affection for him, he was extremely tender of her reputation, as he considered it as nearly connected with his own: he forbore, therefore, to take any particular notice of her in Miss Gilmour's presence, that she might not harbour any suspicion about him. When he was alone with Myra, he was as affectionate as ever; more indeed than usual: but as he had now few private interviews with her, this very behaviour of his made Myra give him still fewer opportunities of that kind.

During

During the first eight or ten days after Miss Gilmour's arrival, Sir Edward's hours passed away very unpleasantly, but time at length rendered Charlotte more agreeable to him than she at first promised to be: and a scheme which Myra's increasing coldness towards him had put into his head, made him imagine that Miss Gilmour might become useful to him. He saw, by her little attentions, that she wished for nothing so much as to make him particular to her: and though he was not coxcomb enough to suppose that she was, or would be in love with him (or had the least desire that she should be so) yet he thought, that if by encouraging her vanity he could alarm Myra, and by raising the passion of jealousy in her breast, discover any latent sparks of love concealed there,

there, he might thereby blow them into a flame, and gain the capital point which he had so long wished to arrive at.

Full of this new scheme he prepared directly to carry it into execution, and had address enough to bring it about by almost imperceptible degrees.

Miss Gilmour sung in the highest style: and in the same style played both upon the harpsichord and guitar. In voice and execution she was superior to most women.

Sir Edward artfully forwarded his designs, by seeming to be wonderfully charmed with her excellence in music: and though the unaffected tender notes of Myra had a touching simplicity in them which penetrated his soul: though he would have preferred, a thousand
times,

times, a plaintive ballad of Arne's sung by her, to the most elegant composition of Giardini's warbled with all its graces by Miss Gilmour, and accompanied by her fine fingers, yet he paid the latter all the compliments which she really deserved, and by so doing excited in her a still stronger desire to excel.

From music they proceeded to her other attainments. Charlotte was mistress of the French and Italian languages: but pretending to be not quite perfect in the latter, often feigned ignorance, and intreated Sir Edward to assist her in translating, or in correcting her translation, from some of the most tender passages in the most celebrated authors of Italy.

Sir Edward very clearly saw her plan, and as it so entirely coincided with his

his own, fell into it with all imaginable ease: but took care that his whole behaviour should extend no farther than admiration, as he would have thought himself actually criminal in pretending a passion for one woman while he was really possessed with a strong inclination for another: and was not so much the fine gentleman as to aim at being the object of universal attraction in the female world: though in that world he made a very attractive appearance.

Sir Edward would not have thought of trying the force of Myra's love, by the assistance of Miss Gilmour, had she not, from her first coming to Mr. Elrington's, made direct advances to him: but he did not think himself any way to blame in giving encouragement to the extreme propensity which she shew-

ed to play, chat, laugh, sing, or romp with him, whenever a proper opportunity offered.

Myra soon saw the advances which Miss Gilmour made to Sir Edward, and soon perceived the advantages which he derived from them, as he designed that they should chiefly be pushed in her presence: but though she felt all that a heart perfectly filled with a sincere passion for him was capable of feeling, yet, by a vigilant discretion, and by continually inuring herself to be persuaded that Miss Gilmour was so every way more suitable to Sir Edward than she herself could be, she prevented the least sign of jealousy or uneasiness from escaping her upon the occasion. Before them she concealed her emotions, but she paid dear for the concealment of them

them when she was alone, and gave a loose to her reflections.

Sir Edward, who carefully watched her every movement, finding that he could not carry the point he aimed at by his behaviour to Charlotte, began to be tired of fooling with her, and had recourse to his old amusements, which were striding about the country from morning to night, reading or conversing upon abstruse subjects with Mr. Elrington: subjects which, though highly entertaining to that gentleman, were not calculated for the entertainment of ladies.

Miss Gilmour, who had exerted all her powers to charm Sir Edward at first, meerly out of vanity, becoming, by frequent converse with him, more intimately acquainted with the beauties

of his person, as well as those of his conversation, felt a something rising in her breast which she had never felt before: for she had scarcely ever given attention enough to any one of her admirers to be troubled with uneasy sensations on their behaviour to her, notwithstanding the adoration with which they had feasted her; indeed few of them could vie with Sir Edward either in person or understanding. The opportunities which she had of observing him so nearly, joined to the solitude of the country, which prevented her from enjoying a variety of amusements, actually kindled in her bosom an inclination for him, before she was conscious either of its nature or its force. She knew that she chose to be with him because there was no other agreeable fellow in her way, but she did not know that

that if there had been a thousand, she should have preferred Sir Edward Balchen to them all.

New as this inclination for Sir Edward was to her, she was at first at a loss how to express it: but discovered it in a manner entirely agreeable to the natural liveliness of her disposition. She frequently ran into Mr. Elrington's library when he and Sir Edward were deeply engaged, and told the latter that she was half dead with the vapours, and that he must take a walk with her to the next village.

Provoked at such interruptions, he sometimes gave her a flat denial, and sometimes continued reading, without making any answer. In that case, she, with a spirited air, snatched the book from him, threw it to a distant part of

the room, and almost pulling him out of his chair, insisted, in the most peremptory manner, on his going with her.

When they were walking together in the garden, or in the fields, she did not scruple to lean upon his arm, smile in his face, and play a thousand foolish tricks with him, though none of them were of a nature to offend: they were all designed to engage his attention, and to give him pleasure.

As Charlotte had been educated in the great world, she had been accustomed from her birth to these freedoms: and what would have shocked the delicacy of the decent, the innocent Myra, she looked upon as nothing but an easy familiarity. As this fashionable assurance entirely arose from her connections with
people

people who practiced it continually without ever troubling their heads about consequences, and, as indeed from the universal appearance of it, none were ever expected from it, she had no notion of its impropriety; nay, would have thought herself deficient in good-breeding by a less free deportment.

As Sir Edward's life had been spent among those with whom Charlotte had been educated, there was nothing surprising in her carriage to him: nor did he suppose that she meant more by it than the people of their common acquaintance did. But it was almost impossible for a man of his age, perpetually conversing with so fine a girl, in the full bloom of youth and beauty, who was for ever playing before his eyes, and constantly doing something

to attract his observation, not to take advantage sometimes of the liberties which she gave him. He refrained, however, till she actually forced him to be particular: he then snatched a few kisses from her, and oftener than he would have done, because he thought that she expected to be so treated, and not because he was prompted by inclination so to treat her.

Whenever he took such liberties with her, which the familiarity they lived in seemed to authorize, Mr. Elrington and Miss Belladen were generally witnesses to his gallantry, which was indeed conducted with a delicacy that went to the heart of Miss Gilmour, and received with a decency which would not have failed to have made an impression upon his, had it not been pre-engaged.

engaged. But, at the same time that he caressed Charlotte, he died with desire to fold Myra in his arms: and though his lips pressed the beauties of the former, his eyes wandered in search of the latter, and his heart fluttered at the bare idea of embracing her in the same endearing manner.

As Mr. Elrington had for some years been incapable of using a carriage, he had from that period parted with his horses, and only kept one for an Italian chair, into which vehicle he had, since he laid down his equipage, been sometimes lifted, as it was hung low on purpose; and his servants drove him about the park.

This vehicle Sir Edward had occasionally made use of, in order to convey himself to the next village, when

he found himself in a muzzy way, or too indolent to exercise his legs, as his own chaise was not down in H——shire. He had also carried Miss Belladen in it more than once to the nearest post-town, when she wanted to purchase any thing for the family.

Charlotte, having heard that Myra had been in such a situation with Sir Edward, took a fancy to be drove by him also, on a remarkably fine morning for the season, though by reason of some late heavy rains, the country was wet and dirty. Charlotte had, notwithstanding, signified her inclination to Sir Edward to air in the park, in this carriage. He was not much disposed to oblige her, but was at last almost wheedled into compliance, when Miss Belladen, quite ignorant of Miss Gilmour's whim,

whim, (for it was nothing more than a meer contrivance to spend a few hours with Sir Edward) came down with her hat and cloak on ready to go to her brother, with whom she intended to spend the day.

At the appearance of Miss Belladen thus dressed, Sir Edward started, and asked her whither she was going.

To see my brother and sister, replied she.

And how do you go? cried he, eagerly.

I walk, said she; John will see me safe there, and my brother will send me home in his chariot.

Walk? and why can't the fellow send the carriage for you, if you must go? But believe me, you shall not walk. I will carry you in the chair. The horse is just now putting to for me.

Myra blushed, and would have declined the acceptance of his offer, but he was absolute, and all contention was vain.

Charlotte stared at Sir Edward with the utmost amazement to find that he had so very soon forgot the promise which he had, at her request, made her that same morning. She had at first a violent propensity to rally him a little upon the oddness of his behaviour to her, but, upon second thoughts, she began to fancy, what had not occurred to her before, that he was really fond of Myra; and in consequence of that surmise, imagined that she should more easily obtain an explanation to her conjectures by seeming to take not the least notice of it.

From

From this very instant Charlotte became a nice observer of all their words, looks and actions: not a syllable, not a glance, not a movement was unnoticed. The contempt with which Sir Edward had mentioned Harry Belladen, and the tender solicitude he gave himself about his sister, immediately opened her eyes, and she now first discovered the true cause of her being thus disregarded by him. Upon reflecting, however, that he could never entertain any thoughts of Myra Belladen for a wife, and that he only trifled with her for his amusement, she did not see why she should not endeavour to gain him herself. Besides, she had no reason to suspect Myra's virtue, and she also conjectured that if Myra could resist the temptations such a fine young fellow threw in her way,

way, she might be benefited by her resistance.

In this manner she administered consolation to herself for the slight which Sir Edward had put upon her, but his behaviour, nevertheless, made no small impression upon her, not of the most agreeable kind. Her mind was very much hurt by the shock which her vanity had sustained. During the absence of Sir Edward the hours passed lazily away: nor did they pass more to his satisfaction; for though Myra was, in a manner, compelled to let him carry her to her brother's, she behaved with so much circumspection, that he made no other use of this opportunity than to shew his esteem for her, in preventing her from being fatigued with walking so far in the dirt, as her brother's

ther's house was at a distance from Mr. Elrington's.

When Sir Edward had carefully lifted Miss Belladen out of the chair at her brother's door, he, instead of going home directly to Miss Gilmour, took a ride round the country without bestowing a single thought upon her.

Charlotte, though heartily piqued, was careful to express no resentment at his return: on the contrary, she summoned up all her spirits to entertain him, and to make him feel the less regret at the absence of Myra. She entered into all his schemes with the greatest good-humour, and, finding him disposed to sit with her uncle, brought down her *Metastasio* and placed herself by them.

Mr.

Mr. Elrington smiled at her shutting herself up in his library all day, for she had not been to take her usual walk in the garden, and told her that want of air would make her sick.

Why then, my dear uncle, said she archly, you must really chide Sir Edward, for he promised to give me an airing in your chair to-day: but I suppose he quite forgot me.

I positively never once thought about you, replied Sir Edward seriously; but you have your horse and your servant here, why don't you ride?

Because I abhor riding about only with a servant, said she; it looks as if one had not a male friend in the world.

There is a fair hint for you, Sir Edward, said Mr. Elrington.

Perhaps

Perhaps so, replied the baronet smiling; but I am too lazy to take it.

Lord, how you love your ease, you idle creature!

Why, faith madam, I do love it better than any thing in this world.

The ladies excepted, said Mr. Elrington to Sir Edward.

No exceptions, my good friend, no exceptions. I swear that I don't know any thing at present more likely to deprive me of that greatest of all earthly enjoyments than a woman.

Why really, said Mr. Elrington, who was partial to his neice's person and accomplishments, and thought that Sir Edward totally overlooked them; if liberty of speech be included in that greatest of all earthly enjoyments, you seem to be completely possessed of it.

Sir

Sir Edward took up his book and made no reply.

Much in this manner did they spend the day, but when evening approached, Sir Edward began to have a multitude of fears, lest Harry Belladen should not take proper care of his sister, and suffer her to walk home with no other attendant than a servant.

Full of these fears, he quitted the house, and walked towards Mr. Belladen's, expecting to meet her, in case her brother refused the chariot.

After having paced a great part of the way, he heard the sound of a carriage. As it approached, he called to the coachman, and asked him to whom he belonged: and upon being informed that he lived with Mr. Belladen he was at first tempted to step in, and return home

home with her: but on thinking farther, as he could not tell whether she might not be frightened or displeased, or whether the servants might not make impertinent observations, he resisted, though not without some reluctance, the strong desire he had to speak to her, and walked by the side of the carriage till it stopped at Mr. Elrington's: He was then going, in the ardor of his impatience, to help her down, when a very genteel young fellow, elegantly dressed, jumped out, and, giving her his hand, led her to the house.

Sir Edward was so struck with amazement at this unexpected sight, that he suffered them to pass him without uttering a single word, and followed them into a parlour, where the gentleman made himself known to Mr. Elrington,

as Mr. Westbury, the brother of Mrs. Belladen.

After this necessary explanation he intreated Mr. Elrington to give him leave sometimes to pay his respects to him, and to the lady who had just been trusted to his care. He then bade Myra adieu, which entirely predicted a speedy renewal of his civilities.

Sir Edward, wild to know the meaning of all this, was preparing to ask Myra not a few questions, when Mr. Elrington, who found his own curiosity very much excited, also prevented him: while Miss Belladen, perfectly unconcerned at the motives of it, gratified it by saying that she met with Mr. Westbury at her brother's, who was lately returned from making the tour of Europe, at a time when they did not expect

pect him: though his return had been much wished for by his father, as he was in a bad state of health, and as it was thought that he could not live long. It was not possible, continued Myra, to hinder his coming home with me, or I would have gladly excused him.

Sir Edward, who did not greatly relish the sudden appearance of this Westbury, for neither his person nor his address was in the least forbidding, was, however, a little softened by the conclusion of Myra's speech, as it seemed to proceed entirely from her heart; while Mr. Elrington told Myra that he thought she had no occasion to make any apology, as there could have been no impropriety in Mrs. Belladen's brother's waiting upon her home.

Sir

Sir Edward could have almost wished that Mr. Elrington had been silent upon that head, while Miss Gilmour, who saw his uneasiness, cried, Well, I declare Miss Belladen, I am quite of my uncle's way of thinking. You acted, in my opinion, perfectly right, to put yourself under the protection of so pretty a fellow as Mr. Westbury appears to be. I am actually glad that he is coming among us; he will enliven the solitude of the country prodigiously, and help to diversify our amusements: we four, Sir Edward, shall make the sweetest *partie carrée* imaginable. Are you not of my way of thinking? continued she with a smile.

Not absolutely, madam, said he, gravely, since you will oblige me to tell you my sentiments.

Ah,

Ah, cried she, now that's because you are so particular: you love fatiguing exercise, and doat upon books. You have no ideas of a softer nature. Indeed, indeed, Sir Edward, you want a little polishing. A tender inclination, now, would add excessively to your character. Nothing so completely forms a man as a familiar acquaintance with the *belle passion*. It softens him beyond expression.

Heaven defend me from being so softened, cried Sir Edward, peevishly, I have seen enough of the torments of lovers, to keep me from increasing the number of that miserable herd of human beings, who seem to be full of absurdities, inconsistencies, and contradictions.

What,

What are all lovers wretched then? said Miss Gilmour, casting a languishing look on him, with her fine black eyes.

Indeed, madam, you apply to a very improper person, replied he, to answer so many interrogations, as I am not in love myself, and perhaps never intend to be.

As to your not being touched with that passion at present, Sir Edward, I can say nothing to it, but I verily suppose that you will be: your perhaps was uttered with so much uncertainty, that I would venture a good deal, continued she with an arch laugh, that you are upon the brink of the precipice: you are in a tottering situation indeed, my dear Sir Edward.

At the conclusion of this speech, which was rather too closely directed to him,

him, Sir Edward knitted his brows, and, turning from her to Mr. Elrington, began to renew the subject of their morning conversation, though, while he was thus employed, he lost no opportunity of observing Myra very strictly, whom Charlotte began to question more particularly about Mr. Westbury, as she saw that she should thereby have the best chance to force Sir Edward to listen to her chat.

When they were all retired for the evening, to their several apartments, Miss Gilmour, who was become deeply touched with Sir Edward, and who now plainly perceived that he was no less taken with Myra, entered into a critical examination of her rival in his love, in order to discover the latent charms which had captivated a heart,

of which she wished to be sole mistress: and, upon the most exact scrutiny, found that in beauty, accomplishments, fortune, and even in youth, (being two or three years younger than Miss Belladen) she had very greatly the advantage. Something, therefore, said she to herself, must certainly be in her manner that has attracted him: the *tout-ensemble* has done the business. If I can but copy that something with my superior talents, and striking figure, I shall carry it all to nothing. I see what it is—the girl, from her retired education, and want of knowing the world, has a kind of blushing, bashful behaviour, which I suppose, makes him believe that she has a much larger share of modesty than the rest of her sex. Some men are pleased with this carriage in a woman, they

they think it is a mark of innocence; but they are generally deceived by it: however, it is as easy to put on such a carriage, as it is to set one's cap in the glass: and then, if this young Westbury should have a mind to the girl at the same time, he will take off her attention to Sir Edward, and I shall have him all to myself.

Flushed with these hopes, Charlotte retired to her pillow, and, before she came down the next morning to breakfast, she rehearsed the part which she intended to act for the day, in her dressing-room, in order to be quite perfect. Lord, said she, while she mimicked Myra's air and manner, 'tis extremely stupid to be so soft, so silent, so gentle and so dull, except I had a lover at my feet ready to encourage me. A

little life and vivacity, methinks, are ten times more agreeable. But, as Sir Edward has a different taste, and as I must have him at all events——Here she went on with her mimicry for a few moments, and then tripped down briskly to the breakfast-parlour, where she found Sir Edward, whom the unexpected appearance of Westbury had rendered so wakeful, that he hardly closed his eyes all night, fearing that he might make too favourable an impression upon Miss Belladen.

Miss Gilmour, though she had tripped down stairs with the lightness and alacrity of a wood-nymph, the moment she entered the parlour, advanced with a slower motion and threw off all her airiness. A languor was spread over her whole person, and a softness appeared

peared in her looks which really added not a little to her beauty. She seated herself at the table in a languishing attitude, spoke few words, and when obliged to converse, uttered what she had to say in a small voice and with a meek countenance.

This alteration in Miss Gilmour was not much regarded by Sir Edward, whose thoughts were all employed about Miss Belladen, but as she had entered upon a character which she perfectly knew how to sustain, she followed him into the garden, and by a thousand endeavours to study his taste and humour, at length forced him, whether he would or no, to see that she could be as gentle and as tender as the mistress of his soul. All her lively sallies, her flights of imagination, drole repartees, and arch smiles

were laid aside : a dying languor, and a modest timidity, appeared in her eyes whenever Sir Edward looked towards her : a gentle sigh, if he only by accident touched her, issued from her bosom, a beautiful flush crimsoned her cheeks, and a delicate confusion seemed to have taken possession of her whole frame. For hours she walked by his side without speaking a syllable, except he first addressed himself to her, and then hesitated as if she did not perfectly comprehend the meaning of what he said to her, or else made an indirect answer, accompanied with a sigh vented in a manner as if she had taken infinite pains to suppress it.

For two or three days she went on in this style of behaviour, during which Mr. Westbury had twice made his appearance

pearance at Mr. Elrington's, and paid the greatest court to Myra, with whose elegant person, and amiable disposition he was supremely charmed. Though that sweet girl gave him not the smallest encouragement to profess himself her admirer, he nevertheless did so, and embraced all opportunities to persuade her to listen to his addresses.

In vain did Myra honestly urge both the deficiency in her fortune, and her disinclination to any change in her condition; he would not be repulsed: he only intreated her to permit his visits. When you know me better, Miss Belladen, said he, and can be thoroughly convinced how truly, how tenderly I esteem you, I flatter myself that you will find yourself disposed to make some return to a passion which, till I became

acquainted with you, never troubled my repose. It is a passion, however, which I ought, I think, to cherish, because it will enable me to repair, in some measure, the injury which you have sustained by your brother's alliance with my family. My father cannot, according to the course of nature, live a great while. I shall indeed be sincerely grieved to lose him, but as his death is a misfortune which I have long had reason to expect, let me receive all the consolation I am capable of from you, the only woman in the world who can give me any, and for whom I must feel an everlasting regard.

Myra, with down cast eyes, and an unquiet mind heard him, but could say only in return, that she was happy in
her

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 153

her then way of life, and could not bear to think of altering it.

Mr. Elrington, who did not let the different behaviour of his young people escape him, was more pleased with the situation in which they appeared to be at this time than he had ever been. He observed in Miss Gilmour a strong desire to make a conquest of Sir Edward Balchen, and buoyed himself up with hopes that she would at length accomplish her designs, especially if Miss Belladen could be brought to listen to Mr. Westbury. Sir Edward was, in Mr. Elrington's opinion, a very good match for his niece, and he thought that Myra would certainly be out of her senses if she rejected Westbury. Ever studious to improve every incident to her advantage, and knowing that he should

do a considerable service to Charlotte at the same time, he talked to her warmly in favour of Westbury, and pointed out minutely every emolument which would naturally arise from the acceptance of his offers.

Myra heard her worthy friend without speaking a single word, and, while he was waiting, full of fond hopes for her consent to what he had warmly recommended, answered him with a flood of tears.

Mr. Elrington, both afflicted and shocked at her distress, begged her to recollect herself a little, and not give way to a sorrow which must be interpreted to her disadvantage, as there could be no reason supposed for her refusing such an offer but an inclination for Sir Edward.

At

At this home accusation, the truth flashed like lightning in the cheeks of poor Miss Belladen. With streaming eyes she intreated Mr. Elrington to spare her a little, and not expect her at once to consent to receive the addresses of a man who, however amiable he might be, was yet but little known to her. I will endeavour sir, continued she, trembling all over, to obey you in every thing. You have been more than a father to me, and I shall always revere you as a parent.—Give me only some time to become acquainted with Mr. Westbury, and I hope I shall be able to conform to your will.

As I have no will but for your happiness, my dear child, replied he, I hope you will, in time, find no difficulty in following my advice, which I give you

to the best of my judgment, and with the best intention in the world.

Myra's heart was so full that she could not return any answer. She retired to her room in order to give a free vent to her tears.

Miss Gilmour, in the mean while, made use of every artifice to win Sir Edward to herself; and, though he was not in the least in love with her, he began to think that she was in love with him. He was indeed not mistaken in his conjectures. The softness, the tenderness which she had assumed, on purpose to please, at length became almost natural to her, and she was actually what she at first only pretended to be, far gone in love.

This real passion, which she did not attempt to disguise, and from so fine a
woman

woman too, would, one might have thought, have gained upon him ; but he was so entirely attached to Myra, that he could not bring himself to look upon her in the light in which she certainly would have appeared to him, had not his whole soul been totally propoessed in favour of Miss Belladen.

Charlotte, among her other fancies, affected illness : and, indeed, the mortification which she met with in finding Sir Edward insensible, had almost produced what she had at first only feigned.

Mr. Elrington, who observed her dejection, proposed air and exercise. She replied that she was so faint and weak, she did not believe she could walk.

Then Sir Edward will give you an airing in his chair.

Sir

Sir Edward could not well refuse this favour to his friend who had so long and so hospitably entertained him. He therefore consented, and she suffered him to lift her into the chair, and place himself by her.

As his head was running upon Myra he did not say much: and his silence did not tend to raise her spirits. Inattentive and lost in thought, the horse was left to guide himself, and therefore stumbled, and by so doing overturned the vehicle in the park.

Miss Gilmour was, by this sudden motion, thrown out upon the ground. Sir Edward, in striving to disengage himself, was in danger of being dragged to a considerable distance: but as he soon recovered his presence of mind, he jumped out and went to the assistance
of

of Charlotte ; who, though she had not received any hurt, lay immoveable upon the grass, as if she was in a fainting fit. He raised her gently while her head reclined upon his bosom.

As he had nothing to give her, and was absolutely destitute of help, he was quite at a loss to know what to do with her. He pressed her hands in his, and called upon her to enquire if she had received any hurt: but there was a coolness in his manner, and a composure in his enquiries which did not induce her to believe that he would ever become what she wished him to be.

When she found that her counterfeited illness was of no service to her, she came to herself, and opening her fine eyes, began to enquire with a deep sigh, if he was safe, expressing the
greatest

greatest anxiety lest any mischief should have happened to him. He also thought some apology necessary for the danger into which he had brought her, and therefore made one, but it was awkward enough.

As he did not attempt to put her into the chair again, he could not well help offering his arm to her, that she might rest upon it on her way home: and such excellent use did she make of her time in that situation, that, with her fears upon his account, joined to her tender glances and gentle sighs, he was almost persuaded that she was deeply enamoured with him. But as he received no sort of satisfaction from this persuasion, he expressed none upon the occasion.

When

When they came into the house, however, Miss Gilmour acquainted her uncle with their accident, which she laid entirely upon the poor horse, and expressed the greatest uneasiness lest Sir Edward should have received any harm. Again and again he declared, though abruptly enough, that he was well, but Charlotte still hung about him, and exerted all her powers of pleasing to so great a degree, that Sir Edward began to accuse himself of having been too insensible. The chief thing he had wished for in a wife was a disinterested warmth of affection for him; and here was the very woman who had such an affection for him, with youth, beauty, fortune, and every desirable accomplishment into the bargain.

How

How ridiculous, said he to himself one day, is it for me to overlook in this woman what I may never meet with in another? I have the highest idea of domestic happiness: I believe there is no happiness but that eligible and everlasting. And with whom can I be more likely to find it, than with a girl who has changed her very nature to please me; and who, from the wildest, the giddiest of her sex, is become serious, sensible, and tender? In prudence, in pity therefore, I ought to treat her in another manner, and accept of the heart which she is so willing to offer me. But then this bewitching Myra! When I see her amiable figure, when I listen to her enchanting voice, I am lost: and yet she will not love me. She flies from my arms with as much eagerness

ness as the other would run into them. But I see the reason—that cursed Westbury with his smooth silver tongue has found a passage to her dear gentle bosom, while all my earnest endeavours to move it have been fruitless. I will, therefore, I must conquer this stubborn passion for an obdurate girl, and take to Charlotte Gilmour.

While Sir Edward plumed himself upon this resolution, he was fondly patting Myra's favourite Fidele, who lay in his lap, having accompanied his mistress to Mr. Elrington's. The innocent good-natured little beast returned Sir Edward's kindness by licking the hand which was near him, while he, with a sigh, cried, Poor grateful animal, were but your dear mistress as affectionate as you are, how supremely blest should I be?

In

In the midst of these reflections he was interrupted by seeing Westbury and Miss Belladen pass the end of the walk in which he was sitting. They appeared to him in close conference. The young gentleman had Myra's hand in his. This was too much for Sir Edward—he started at the sight: it put all his reflections to rout in a moment. Setting down Fidele, therefore, he went in search of Miss Gilmour, determined to return her love, at least to encourage it.

He had not walked far before he met her sauntering down the walk in which he advanced towards her. He went up to her directly, and seizing her hand, Whither are you going Charlotte? said he, with more gentleness in his manner than she had ever observed before.

I was

I was going, replied she with a remarkable tenderness in her voice, to look for you.

Well, said he smiling on her, and putting her arm in his, and what did you want with me? To walk or to ride, to play or to read? You would fain now, Charlotte, persuade me that I am absolutely necessary to your happiness, and that you cannot enjoy life without me.

Miss Gilmour, had never heard any thing like this from him before, and found that she must at once either deny her inclination, or divulge it. She was not disposed to do either the first or the last. A denial she thought would ruin her for ever with him, and an acknowledgment, till he had thought proper to make a declaration, she did
not

not at all approve of. She could therefore only be silent: but though she said nothing, she could not help blushing extremely at being discovered to feel sentiments which she could not with propriety avow. Her confusion heightened her natural beauty, and it was increased by Sir Edward's gazing at her with unusual tenderness. With all her courage she could not bear his glances: she turned her face away but did not withdraw her hand.

Why this averted countenance, Miss Gilmour? said Sir Edward. What an inconsistent creature is woman! While we are indifferent, she tries every art to charm us; but the moment we become seriously attached to her, we are no longer valuable in her eyes. The desired conquest is either slighted or forgot,

forgot, and the next man whom she meets becomes equally her object and her prey.

You do us wrong, said Charlotte, laughing. If one or two should act thus ridiculously, must we all fall under this severe censure? Must I, continued she, softening her voice, who never have been fickle, be included in this general satire upon my sex?

Why, are you not, replied he, the veriest coquette in nature? and will you not, as soon as you imagine that I love you, quit me for another? for Westbury, for any man?

And why this particular invective against Westbury whom I have scarce beheld? But I see your heart, and know it better than you do yourself, Sir Edward. Miss Belladen is the person who
wholly

wholly engrosses your attention, and as for me, whether I am coquette or prude, grave or gay, I shall be alike unheeded, unregarded by you.

This speech was like a dagger to the heart of Sir Edward. He turned aside crying, 'Sdeath, 'tis but too true, in a whisper: then aloud, How often madam, continued he with a very serious air, will it be necessary for me to repeat to you and to Mr. Elrington, that I trouble not myself about Miss Belladen?

He almost flung her from him as he spoke, so violent was his vexation. She, struck with this coldness, which seemed actually to border upon aversion, just when she began to flatter herself, that she had gained his regard, walked from him to a seat, and leaning her head

head upon her hand, while the tears of disappointment gushed from her eyes.

Sir Edward, melted with her situation, followed her, and while he blamed himself for want of sensibility, sat down by her, took her hand, and pressed it to his lips: but he spoke not a single word.

This tender action, with the graces which attended every thing he did, even when he was in the worst humour, touched her to the soul. She lifted up her swimming eyes to him: a faint smile of satisfaction gleamed upon her face.

Sir Edward, affected with her behaviour, threw his arm round her, and straining her to his bosom, cried softly, My poor Charlotte, what mean these streaming tears?

She could remain silent no longer. With a face covered with blushes, and a voice interrupted with sighs, Oh! let me go Sir Edward, said she; let me leave you for ever. I see, I see but too plainly, that I raise no passion in your breast but pity, and my heart is too tender to be satisfied with that alone.

Sir Edward was absolutely confounded with a declaration so little expected; and which he was so unable to answer in the manner which it deserved. He thought that it was his duty to love Charlotte, but he could not give up Myra, even when he thought her engaged to another. This both hurt and perplexed him immoderately. He had too much honour and too much delicacy to feed her with hopes which never
might

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 171

might be gratified on his part, and at the same time felt but little inclination to return her passion in the manner she seemed to wish. Yet he felt for her extremely, and was equally distressed how to relieve her.

As Charlotte rose up to go, he attended her. They both walked towards the house. She, rather in the pensive style: he, buried in thought. When they came in they found Miss Belladen much happier than themselves, though neither of them knew the reason of it. But Mr. Westbury, finding that Myra did not listen to his addresses with the cheerfulness which he wished, had interested his sister, who was extremely fond of him, in his affairs: and she, having been to make Myra a visit, had endeavoured to persuade her to return

her brother's affection with more warmth than she had been hitherto inclined to do.

In this respect Mrs. Belladen thought very differently from her husband, as she did in most other points, for he was rather disposed to set his brother entirely against matrimony. Because, in case of his death without a legal heir, he, in right of his wife, would come in for his estate; and he had not so much fraternal affection for Myra as to chuse to see her in possession of so large a fortune rather than himself, though he had already, by his artful management in gaining over his father to his ungenerous purposes, a very handsome income.

Myra, thus pressed both by Mrs. Belladen, and Mr. Elrington to accept
of

Sir EDWARD BALCHEN, Bart. 173

of the hand of a very amiable man, who was exceedingly enamoured with her, would have found no repugnance to an acquiescence with his desires, had not Sir Edward's powerful attractions, both personal and intellectual, made too deep an impression upon her to be easily effaced by any other: but when she considered and re-considered that tho' he appeared at times as much taken with her as Mr. Westbury was, yet his vast superiority of condition, and his frequent declarations that he had no designs upon her, (by which no honourable ones must have been implied) made him appear still more and more dangerous; and animated her to summon up all her fortitude, that she might be enabled to comply with the advice of her friends, and give happiness to a

worthy man, whom, though she could not love, she nevertheless extremely pitied.

Thus determined, she treated Mr. Westbury with infinitely more consideration than ever, and tried every method to bring herself to receive his assiduities with pleasure.

The sharp eagle-eyed Sir Edward soon perceived that these young people began to be upon a better footing than they had yet been with each other; and though these observations occasioned a thousand heavy sighs, he, notwithstanding made every possible effort to tear the image of Miss Belladen, all lovely as she was, from his heart, and place Charlotte there in her stead, who, since she had discovered so much sensibility in his favour that day in the garden,

den, had kept a greater distance than usual. She had indeed blushed a thousand times, when alone, at her weakness, in feeling so much for a man who was not only indifferent to her, but evidently in love with another; and thought that she had been guilty of no small folly in letting him see the great influence he had over her.

At other times, when she saw Myra more than commonly civil to Westbury, and observed the raptures which her civilities excited in him, she fondly imagined that when they were united, and when Sir Edward had lost all hopes of Miss Belladen, she might perhaps, become agreeable to him.

These flattering hopes, which she could not help now and then indulging, in spite of her reason and her pride, gave

an air of softness to her deportment whenever Sir Edward addressed her upon any common occurrence, which still expressed her desire to engage his affections: but, as she was not really possessed of Myra's amiable gentleness, she could not always keep so strict a guard upon herself as to disguise entirely those sentiments which were the most natural to her.

For about a week, while Westbury and Miss Belladen appeared to be quite upon an agreeable footing, Sir Edward spent many hours with Miss Gilmour in walking, reading, &c. &c. &c. during which, as they were often separated from company, a number of little fooleries passed between them, not unfrequent between the two sexes, but of small consequence when the passion which pro-

vokes

vokes them is not reciprocal; and which are much oftener encouraged indiscreetly than otherwise.

Sir Edward, trying to like Charlotte, thought such innocent fooleries might tend to raise a flame, of which there was at that time no great appearance.

They were one day sitting in a temple in the garden, adjoining to the greenhouse, from which Charlotte had gathered some sprigs of orange and had stuck them in her bosom. Sir Edward was remarkably fond of the scent of these flowers, and pulled them off to smell as she leaned near him. She did not correct this freedom, nor was there anything particular in it: but Fidele, who had been lying quietly at Sir Edward's feet, catching at some of the blossoms which fell upon the ground, jumped up

in a playful manner, and accidentally touched Miss Gilmour's finger.

Provoked at this, and not being fond of the poor animal, for several reasons, she spurned him from her with her foot, and called him an impertinent little beast.

The harmless creature, not having been used to be so roughly treated, ran yelping to Sir Edward, as if he longed to complain of the usage which he had met with, who took him up in his lap, and making much of him said, Poor innocent animal, those who can abuse thee must want good-nature extremely. Of all kinds of cruelty there is none I think exceeds that to those creatures to whom nature has not given the power of complaining of the injuries which they undeservedly receive, and to whom
she

she has nevertheless endued with a generosity too great to make them disposed to retaliate them.

As he uttered these words with a vehemence of expression, which, added to the subject itself, was doubly aggravating; Charlotte started up, and with a tone and air which gave full strength to her ironical expression, thus replied: Oh! sir, I ask your pardon—I had forgot—It is Miss Belladen's dog whom I have so unfortunately offended. You must excuse my want of recollection, continued she, with a sarcastical laugh.

Sir Edward, struck with the insulting turn of her countenance, and the visible want of that virtue which in our intercourse with each other, is so justly termed humanity, would have looked upon her absence at that time as the

greatest happiness that could have befallen him. Her treatment of poor Fidele, which had now entirely convinced him of the extreme difference between her and his beloved Miss Belladen, had rendered her also absolutely odious to him.

These reflections upon the discovery of Miss Gilmour's disposition, would certainly have urged him to go directly to Myra, and to make the most public avowal of his passion for her, had he not been assured that such an avowal would be too late, as she was irrecoverably engaged to Westbury.—With the most bitter regret, therefore, he accused himself of having lost former opportunities of confessing a passion for her, which, by having been properly discovered, might have induced her to listen
to

to him as easily, as she had probably done to Westbury. Why, why, cried he, am I possess'd of this uncommon, this unfortunate delicacy, which will not suffer me to take the measures that other men have done with success in similar cases? Why could I not have trusted to that sweetness of temper, to that excellent heart which this angelic girl is possess'd of, for a proper return to my passion? Why must I suppose that she must be light, fickle, and coquetish because other women are so? Why must I imagine that she, whom I have never yet seen guilty of a fault, should resemble the most worthless, by marrying meerly from mercenary motives? If she had not loved me immediately, the tender affection I should have been perpetually discovering for her, and the
strongest

strongest proofs which I should have given her of my disinterested love, must have awakened not only her warmest gratitude, but in time——Heavens! what an opportunity of being happy have I absolutely thrown away, only from a ridiculous piece of delicacy!

These reflections, added to many more of the same nature, fixed Sir Edward upon the seat on which Charlotte had left him, for a considerable time, and filled him with such gloom and discontent, that he could not possibly conceal his feelings when he returned to the house.

Miss Gilmour, piqued to the last degree, at finding that all her advances were come to nothing, grew quite weary of endeavouring to please without being successful,

successful, and determined to return to London.

With this resolution she went to Mr. Elrington to inform him of her design, and was just beginning to open it, when she was interrupted by a great bustle and noise without: and soon afterwards one of the servants came to tell Mr. Elrington that Lord George F——'s carriage had been overturned not many yards from the avenue: and that, as his lordship had thereby received a violent contusion in his arm, which made it dangerous for him to proceed on his journey, his servants had brought him into the house.

The worthy and humane Mr. Elrington, who was remarkable for his hospitable disposition, expressed much concern at this accident, and ordered his
men

men to assist him in getting to the room to which they had carried my lord, that he might make an immediate offer of his house and services. Miss Gilmour, at the same time, whose spirits flowed with fresh alacrity upon this occasion, cried hastily, John, John, what kind of person has my lord—I don't recollect him just now.

Madam?—replied the fellow, turning his head towards her as he was going to draw his master's chair.

I say, is he young—or well-made—or how?—I say John—Lord what an unluckily accident! but I suppose he is sensible?

Oh dear! yes madam, said John—he is a young, handsome gentleman, and mighty sensible.

At

At this information Miss Gilmour could hardly contain her joy. Now, said she to herself, if this Lord George is but any thing tolerable, I will play a fine game with my sweet Sir Edward: a stupid, insensible!—but if there is the smallest particle of warmth in that heart of his, this new man shall help to fetch it out. His being a man of fashion is prodigiously in my favour.

While Miss Gilmour was enjoying her scheme by anticipation, Mr. Elrington having been wheeled into the room into which Lord George was carried, received him with all the politeness in his power, and offered him an apartment till he was recovered.

My Lord, pleased with his reception, most graciously accepted of so hospitable an offer, as there was no house near in
which

which he could be decently accommodated. He was therefore conveyed to a chamber, and a surgeon was sent for to attend him.

As neither the presence of Miss Gilmour nor Miss Belladen was necessary upon this occasion, the former spent her time in contriving an excuse to her uncle for delaying her journey to town, while the latter, at the desire of that gentleman, gave orders for the proper entertainment of his lordship and his servants.

The small fuss which this unexpected event had made in the family prevented them from immediately thinking about Sir Edward, who was, indeed, often abroad for hours together. But as he had on that day been absent longer than he used to be, Mr. Ehington

ton sent a servant to search for him, and to inform him of what had happened.

The servant found him striding up and down the garden; and, after having respectfully delivered his message, withdrew.

When Sir Edward began to consider on the message, (for it was some time before he could attend to any thing but what was ever uppermost in his thoughts) he hastily advanced towards the house, and, as he went along, determined to embrace this opportunity to leave Mr. Elrington for a while, and to retire to a pleasant farm in the neighbourhood, the picturesque situation of which had often kindled in him an inclination to spend a few days there. And he had certainly followed the impulse

pulse of that inclination before, had not his passion for Myra rendered him unable to separate himself from her. But now, as she was absolutely, as he thought, engaged to Westbury, and as Lord George was so opposite a character, that he could not with any pleasure be much acquainted with him, he resolved to gratify his inclination in going to the farm, where he might, unobserved, know every thing that passed at Elm-Walk, which was the name of Mr. Elrington's abode.

Farmer Ford and his family were clean civil people. Sir Edward had more than once been of service to them: he was therefore sure of being quite at his ease at their house. He was only puzzled how to bring Mr. Elrington to consent to part with him, as he grew
most

most excessively fond of his company. But he, at last, gained his point by promising to come and see him every day.

Miss Gilmour was present at the adjustment of this affair, and with one of her affected, languishing smiles, bade Sir Edward adieu. He was hurrying out of the parlour, and calling his servant to attend him, when he met Myra in the passage. The unexpected sight of her, at that moment, almost turned him from his purpose. He stopped, involuntarily: and his eyes, though the discontented state of his mind had rather given a fierceness to them before, were instantly softened. He took her by the hand, and said, I am going Myra, I am going: God bless you, my dear girl.

Myra,

Myra, who did not in the least suspect his intentions, but imagined that he was going to London, and that she should never see him again, started and changed colour, but could not utter a word.

What! cried Sir Edward eagerly, will you not wish me happiness, not even wish that I may be happy, Miss Belladen?

Heaven knows, cried Myra blushing, and ready to weep, that I do most sincerely, most earnestly wish you happiness, Sir Edward.

I thank you, my dear, dear girl, said he, pressing her hand to his lips; and then, tearing himself away from her, added—but I shall never know happiness again.

As

As soon as he left her, instead of going into the parlour to Mr. Elrington, she turned back, unable to hide her emotion; and to conceal her tears, which flowed apace, she hurried up stairs to her own apartment, where it was a great while before she could compose herself, though she over and over taxed herself with being guilty of the highest injustice to Mr. Westbury, whose behaviour to her had ever been unexceptionable, and whose tenderness and regard seemed to be daily increasing.

When she had recalled her scattered spirits, and dried up her tears, she went to Mr. Elrington, from whom she learnt Sir Edward's design, and could not help feeling a secret joy, that he was still to be so near her; but she, at the same time, extremely condemned herself for
being

being so rejoiced. She did not indeed long remain so, when she recollected that Farmer Ford had a daughter about sixteen, who was reckoned one of the finest girls in the county. She immediately began to be almost assured that pretty Patty Ford had attracted Sir Edward to the farm.

As soon as these ideas arose in her mind, involuntary sighs issued from her tender bosom. She could hardly refrain from bursting into a flood of tears. She made haste to quit Mr. Elrington, under the pretence of regulating some domestic affairs, and in the garden, upon the very seat on which Sir Edward and she had often conversed together, took herself severely to task for giving way to a passion for one man, when she had at the same time given
her

her word to Mr. Elrington to marry another, as soon as she could bring herself to like him.

Fatal prepossession, she cried, to one dear amiable object alone! to one on whom I ought not to have bestowed a single thought, as I could never reasonably hope to obtain him! What is it to me, who is the object of his affection? Every thing relating to him should be equally indifferent to me. Why, therefore, this new emotion? I saw his attentions to Miss Gilmour without being thus affected: but perhaps I was unconcerned at them, because I perceived that they were not sincere: because I observed that what flowed from his lips was not the language of his heart. But why should I be troubled about Patty Ford? He will not, certainly, think of marry-

ing a girl in her station of life, though ever so beautiful: and if he has dishonourable intentions, I ought to detest him. The man who would willingly seduce an innocent girl, ought to be as much the object of my abhorrence as if he had affronted me in the same manner. A man of that turn, who is capable of acting so base a part, however desirable he may be in other respects, ought to be scorned and despised by every woman whose reputation is dear to her. Were men, so blind to the beauty of virtue, and so unmoved by the charms of innocence, suspected, hated, and avoided by the women whom they pursue, the number of them would soon be lessened. It is from the indiscreet advances of our sex to them, that they are encouraged to make improper addresses

addresses to them; and to such advances must be attributed the distress which is generally produced by them. I have been myself, hitherto, fortunate enough to meet with no ill consequences from my inclination for this agreeable insinuating man, but such consequences I may dread if I do not get the better of it.

These reflections roused every faculty of her soul, and instigated her to follow the advice which her good friend Mr. Elrington had communicated to her, and which she well knew was both necessary and prudent: but yet, though she summoned both her sense and her discretion to her aid, she could not drive away Sir Edward's image one moment from her breast. And so far was she from obtaining this conquest

over herself, that, the more she thought about it, the more difficulties she encountered. At length they grew absolutely too powerful to be resisted. She found there was no way to avoid the threatened danger but to fly from it. But flight was impossible: her gratitude to Mr. Elrington, and her true regard for him were bars sufficiently strong enough to prevent her from leaving his hospitable, his almost parental roof, till a change in her circumstances rendered her departure from him unavoidable. She could only, therefore, resolve to be more upon her guard: more studious to conceal from the world the sensations which tortured her heart; though she could not conceal them from herself. She strove every hour, to be more and more pleased with Westbury,

or

or at least to appear to be so; and this violent constraint, under which she laid herself, gradually impaired her health, though the alteration which it caused in her constitution was not for some time perceptible.

While poor Myra was thus undeservedly wretched, (for she certainly would not have felt herself so strongly attached to Sir Edward, amiable as he was, had he not been so very solicitous to please her) Charlotte was despising Sir Edward for want of taste in not preferring her lively beauties, to the spiritless charms of her rival, and in scheming new triumphs. Lord George was a creature quite for her purpose: he was young, handsome, and seducing, and at the same time behaved with insolence; which behaviour had been of

infinite service to him in his amorous connections, as his value among the women arose in proportion to the number which he had abandoned. He had indeed been very successful in his gallantries; but his successes had not a little contributed to make him sick of his pleasurable pursuits, and he was actually in search of fresh game when chance threw him in the way of two such fine girls as were Miss Gilmour and Miss Belladen, tho' both so totally different from each other.

As Lord George had always a very expert fellow about his person, he was soon acquainted with the situation of his ground, and determined to make all possible advantage of his servant's intelligence.

He

He had not yet seen either Myra or Charlotte, but he determined, for many obvious reasons, to begin his attack upon the latter, and accordingly proceeded to concert proper measures for his conduct.

As soon as he was able to walk from one room to another, he sent a message to Mr. Elrington and the ladies of the family, to beg the honour of their company, whenever it was agreeable to them.

Mr. Elrington could have as soon reached the Moon as the apartment in which Lord George desired the honour of his company ; for he always remained on the ground floor, and was utterly unable to ascend the stair-case. His lordship was perfectly acquainted with the nature of Mr. Elrington's situation,

though he appeared, at the same time, to be totally ignorant of it. But, as that worthy man was really unacquainted with his character, he thought that without any impropriety, Charlotte and Myra might visit him now and then, when he was well enough to come into his dressing-room.

Miss Belladen, who discovered no felicity in this proposal, and who would rather have employed all her leisure hours by herself, appeared dissatisfied with it; but Miss Gilmour, as she could not visit Lord George without a companion, and who died with impatience for an interview, over-ruled all Myra's objections, and she was obliged to submit.

No eastern monarch upon his first entrance into his Seraglio, after a long absence,

absence, ever surveyed the various beauties which presented themselves before him with more avidity than his lordship surveyed the different attractions of Charlotte and Myra. While the former shot fire into him from a pair of black sparkling eyes, the latter absolutely dissolved him with her languishing blue ones. The brilliancy of Charlotte's complexion animated him, and the more enchanting snowy whiteness of Myra's lovely hands and arms filled him with the most voluptuous sensations. The whole œconomy of Charlotte's features, regularly beautiful, struck him at once with pleasure; but he would, at the same time, have sacrificed them all for the delicious mouth of Myra which was hardly to be equalled. Miss Gilmour's vivacity inspired him with gay

ideas, but the elegant, unaffected modesty of Miss Belladen touched him to the heart. Miss Gilmour's shape was inviting, but Miss Belladen's was quite alluring. Charlotte's sprightly voice roused every passion in his breast, while Myra's melting accents tuned his soul to the most enervating tenderness. Miss Gilmour was, undoubtedly, the most finished beauty, but Miss Belladen was, beyond comparison, the most lovely woman.

If Lord George had been obliged to fix upon one of them, Miss Belladen would have been, most assuredly, the favourite Sultana; but as he was determined to enjoy both, it was necessary for him, as I said before, to begin his attack upon Miss Gilmour. To her, therefore, he chiefly addressed himself, though

though not without sliding in sometimes, artfully enough, a compliment to Myra, which, had she been inclined to him, would have sufficiently engaged her attention.

After a few visits of this kind, his lordship grew able to come down stairs, and thank Mr. Elrington for his hospitality: when he had so done, he made a faint offer to take his leave of Elm-Walk: but that benevolent man, thinking his lordship far from being recovered, desired him, in the most cordial manner, to continue with him till he was perfectly well.

This was the very thing Lord George wanted. After a few speeches, therefore, he at Elm-Walk consented to remain.

As Sir Edward frequently dined at Mr. Elrington's, though he slept at the farm, there naturally passed some civilities between him and his lordship when they met, as they were not unknown to each other; but the latter was as unwilling to discover himself before the Baronet, as he was to have any connections with a man whose character he abhorred. But, in spite of all my lord's precautions, Sir Edward soon found him out, and inwardly rejoiced to perceive that Myra was not the present object of his pursuit, because he knew that his lordship was indefatigable wherever he took a fancy.

As for Charlotte, she played off all her airs and graces with him, before Sir Edward, on purpose to let him see that there were men as handsome as himself,

himself, who preferred her to Myra: but he was quite insensible to every thing except the unusual melancholy of the latter, which, as it hourly increased, affected him beyond expression. It increased indeed, at the same time, the natural charms of her countenance, for it threw over her features so languishing, so tender an expression, that Lord George, though far from having gained his point with Miss Gilmour, could hardly keep his eyes off Miss Bel-laden. He therefore hastened to bring matters to a conclusion with the former, whom he plied, from morning to night, with all the various arts of seduction of which he was master, in hopes of finding an unguarded moment for the completion of his designs; and her behaviour was too encouraging to give him

him any room to believe that he was indifferent to her. And indeed, he followed and flattered her with so much assiduity, that by those assiduities, his handsome person, and his refined address, he had so far made a conquest, that if she did not absolutely give him hopes, he had not the least reason to despair.

As Miss Gilmour omitted nothing which she thought would any way tend to make her look still more attractive, and as her admirer was not a very early riser, she used to ride every morning on horseback, attended by her servant, imagining that the air and exercise might make her appear at the breakfast-table with more vivid bloom.

While she was one morning airing in this manner, the report of a gun, behind

behind a hedge, when she was at the distance of about two miles from Mr. Elrington's, frightened her horse to such a degree, that he threw her upon the ground and galloped away: the servant, paying more regard to the beast, than to his lady, rode after him, and Miss Gilmour, who was at first a little stunned by her fall, opened her eyes in the arms of a gentleman who was kneeling upon the ground, and as soon as she recovered her senses, begged her forgiveness in terms so polite, and with so tender an air, that he very particularly rivetted her attention. There was something, at his first appearance, which struck her, in the surprize she was in, with a resemblance to Sir Edward: but his youth, his voice, and address were

were so different, that she was soon convinced of her mistake.

As soon as she had disengaged herself from his arms, though he was extremely unwilling to part with her, and arose with his assistance from the ground, she began to make some enquiries relating to the situation in which she found herself, and the absence of her servant.

These questions were immediately answered with interrogations by the gentleman who had assisted her to rise; and who appeared to be very much alarmed, lest she should have received any hurt, assuring her that if she felt any injury from her fall, he should consider himself as the unfortunate author of it, as it was the report of his gun which, by frightening her horse, had occasioned it.

She

She then surveyed him with more attention, and perceived that he was in a sporting dress: she perceived too, that his face and figure were not unworthy of her notice.

Mr. Astley, for that was his name, was about three and twenty, and had the most engaging person imaginable, with a softness in his address which captivated Charlotte before she had time to reflect whether she ought to be captivated so suddenly, and to listen to the pleasing accents of a young fellow who was so entire a stranger to her. But though he had not been intentionally the cause of the accident which occasioned the situation in which he found her, he had been innocently so: he offered her all the assistance in his power, and lamented the misfortune in words
which

which shewed that though he regretted her having been in danger of her life, he was charmed to be known to her before she had perfectly recovered from her fright.

The servant returned with her horse: but Mr. Astley made use of so many persuasions against her remounting, and so many intreaties for permission to conduct her home, that she did not know how to refuse his intreaties and persuasions, but consented to lean upon his arm in her way to Mr. Elrington's.

Every look and action of this young gentleman, discovered that he was violently struck with Charlotte, though he behaved to her with a diffidence and respect which were wonderfully winning: the more winning was his behaviour

viour to her as it was so much unlike the treatment she had received both from Sir Edward and Lord George, neither of whom had addressed her in the submissive, supplicating style. The first had looked upon her with pity, the latter with meer passion, but Mr. Astley, on the first survey of her beauty, and her distressful situation, had felt emotions of a very different kind, which he was unable to hide from her observation.

In their way home, Miss Gilmour took an opportunity to ask to whom she was indebted for the care with which she had been so kindly treated.

After a moment's hesitation, he told her that he was the grandson of Sir Robert Astley, but that his father, who was that gentleman's second son, had
been

been so unfortunate as to disgust him by marrying a very amiable woman, no way inferior in birth, but her want of fortune had rendered her disagreeable to her husband's family, who would never receive her in the light of so near a relation; that he had about two years ago lost his father, who, not having been able to leave him much, his mother had retired to that part of the country, in order to live as frugal as she possibly could. Within these two months, continued he, Sir Robert's eldest, and only remaining son, died; I am therefore become heir to the title: but of what advantage will rank be to me madam, added he with a profound sigh, if I am destitute of the means to support it: if I must labour under the misery of seeing a most deserving mother pine
away

away her life in the utmost distress; doubly distressed by having brought into the world so unhappy a wretch as myself?

Here he paused, to wipe off the tears which, in spite of all his endeavours to restrain them, fell from his eyes. There was something so plaintive in his accents, and so affecting in his tale, that Charlotte, who was not void of sensibility, felt herself moved in so uncommon a manner, that she could scarce hinder herself from joining him in his becoming sorrow.

As his eyes immediately returned to an object which now began to engross his thoughts, he saw her sympathizing concern, and saw it with emotion. Gently pressing the hand which he held in his, while she supported herself on his
arm,

arm, and looking earnestly at her, I see, said he with a sigh, that my misfortunes are not yet likely to end, and that this meeting with you, madam, which, had I been in happier circumstances, I should have looked upon as the most fortunate event, will probably cost me one very dear, as I cannot help feeling for you, even upon so short an acquaintance, what I must never perhaps dare to mention any more.

Here he stopped, and threw down his eyes, fearful of having said too much, while Miss Gilmour remained silent, meerly because she did not know what to say. She was extremely pleased with the first view of young Astley, and promised herself some amusement from the gallantries of a pretty fellow, who she soon saw was not indifferent to her :

but

but when she heard him so feelingly describe his unhappy situation, and knew that as he was rejected by his grandfather, and unfavoured by fortune, he would be distanced for ever in the opinion of her family, she felt a real uneasiness.

Every step they took nearer home, gave him an additional charm in her eyes. When they approached the end of the avenue, she withdrew her arm, and thanked him for his assistance with a sweetness which completed the conquest of his heart. The manner in which she expressed her gratitude, pained him extremely, but as he considered her speech as his dismissal, he prepared to take leave of her: he prepared, but the paleness in his countenance, and the dejection in his whole air, evidently shewed

shewed how much he suffered by so doing.

She saw in his looks the situation of his mind. Giving him her hand again with a grace which almost deprived him of the power of utterance, Be assured, sir, said she, that I am truly concerned at what you have just related to me. If it is within my abilities to be of any, the least service to you, you may at any time command me.

Poor Astley, charmed sufficiently before, was now quite lost in admiration. Pressing her hand, which she gave him, to his bosom, he with some difficulty breathed out a pathetic wish to see her once more.

She smiled assent; but, without making any verbal reply, tripped to the house as nimbly as if nothing had happened,

pened, leaving Astley for some time rooted to the spot on which he stood.

When she came into the breakfast-parlour, the little adventure which she had met with that morning, together with the disorder in which her hair appeared, had given a new and uncommon brilliancy to her complexion, and had inspired her with such an unusual sweetness of manners, that she almost looked in the eyes of Lord George like a Divinity, and thereby excited him to redouble his assiduities. He became more than ever solicitous to render himself agreeable, especially as he began to suspect a rival; for Miss Gilmour, having related her adventure, in which she revealed every thing but the name and history of Mr. Astley, and embellished her narration with a

thousand little female flowers of language, and made the undiscovered hero of her tale appear a very redoubtable personage.

Lord George, as soon as she had finished the story of the morning, began to railly her very smartly upon her new conquest, and appealed to Myra for her assent to his opinion; but that amiable girl, who always endeavoured to decline conversation with him, made a very slight reply.

Charlotte, intoxicated with the adulation which she had received, grew absolutely giddy with vanity; and though she condescended to walk with his lordship in the garden, she obliged him, contrary to her usual custom, to keep a proper distance, and would, on no account, suffer the freedoms which she had,

had, if not permitted, at least, not entirely prohibited.

His lordship, who began to be almost tired of the chace when he saw but little hopes of coming in at the death, grew fullen, and pretended to be jealous: being determined to carry his point all to nothing, or to get rid of her at once, that he might try his fortune with Myra.

They passed the whole day in that manner: she quite coquettish, and he in the pouts. Finding however that nothing he could do or say had any effect upon her, he became perfectly indifferent about her. His indifference piqued her pride: and she might have, perhaps, like some others of her resentful sex, in such a situation, have sacrificed her honour and her peace for

ever, in hopes to preserve a conquest which would not in all human probability have lasted above five minutes afterwards, had not the recollection of young Astley's person and behaviour, his respect and his timidity, those constant attendants on a sincere passion, saved her. In him, she thought she saw a real lover; and by reflecting upon him in that flattering light she was greatly comforted for the loss of Lord George, of whom she began to entertain no favourable opinion, though she still toyed and trifled with him when he came in her way, and when they were not in sight of Mr. Elrington. Before him, this Adept in the art of deceiving, always behaved with the utmost delicacy and decorum, so that his hospitable friend did not in the least suspect him

him of having any designs upon either of the young folks under his protection.

Another interview with Astley, which, though it appeared to be accidental, was nevertheless concerted both by him and Miss Gilmour, did not leave them less satisfied with each other than they were at their former meeting.

Lord George, when he found that he could make nothing of Charlotte in his own way, cursed all her coquettish arts, and swore that he never would again attempt a woman of the same stamp. These coquettes, said he, are the most restless beings that God ever created, and play so fast and loose that one never knows where to have them. And when any advantage is gained over them, after a confounded deal of trouble, the

fatigue in the pursuit is hardly compensated by the pleasure of the triumph when the chace is at an end. If Charlotte's person had not been remarkably handsome, if I had not made it a point never to let a fine woman escape me, she might have gone to the Devil with all her d——d airs for me; I should not have bestowed a single thought upon her.

While such sentiments as these with regard to Charlotte passed in his mind, the beauties of Myra appeared in his eyes doubly alluring: but how to get at her—there was the difficulty. She was publickly known to be engaged to Mr. Westbury, as she had herself promised to be his wife, and had only intreated him to allow her time.

To

To this request Westbury agreed, though with great reluctance, and visited her very regularly, but when the approaching end of his father obliged him to absent himself from her, that he might pay his last duties to him.

During these moments of absence, Lord George conceived hopes of seeing Miss Belladen alone. But as her chief care was to avoid Sir Edward, (not being much alarmed about Lord George) she spent most part of her time in her own apartment, when she was not obliged to be with Mr. Elrington: and indeed, the absence of Sir Edward, and the choice which he had made of his habitation, had determined her to accept of Mr. Westbury, as she was now become quite ashamed of her weakness.

All her efforts, however, to drive him from her heart were ineffectual.

Lord George, who had watched, and followed her from day to day, sighed in her ear, said soft things as she passed him, was unwearied in his assiduities about her, and solicitous to give her all the amusement which he could devise; but he found that all his assiduities and solicitude were to no purpose, and that she was quite an immoveable object.

In this disappointed situation he consulted his faithful valet what methods he should pursue with the greatest probability of success, swearing that he must have her, let what would be the consequence.

After having formed and rejected a multitude of schemes, he resolved to
offer

offer a ball to the ladies, in return for Mr. Elrington's civilities to him, and in order to render it more spirited in that part of the country, resolved also to make it a masqued one.

Charlotte's heart, always alive to pleasure, bounded at a scheme so perfectly joyous: but Myra, ever dejected, begged that her absence might be excused, as Mr. Westbury could not be with her, and as his father's dangerous situation rendered her appearance in so public a manner highly improper.

Miss Gilmour, who saw that her uncle did not approve of her going by herself, told Myra that there would not be the least impropriety in her appearance; that every body appeared in public, not only soon after the death of a near relation, but even before the funeral was over.

Miss Belladen lifted up her lovely eyes in astonishment, but was silent: especially as Mr. Elrington persuaded her to accompany his niece.

The next things to be thought of were dresses for the occasion. Charlotte, wild with delight, wrote to London for the most elegant dress which could be fancied: Myra, desiring that she might not be disguised, ordered a plain white lutestring domino.

Sir Edward was not at all averse to this evening's entertainment, as he could be near Myra.

Lord George sent for several dresses to serve his different purposes.

Miss Gilmour gave a proper hint to Mr. Astley, and every creature in the neighbourhood (except the families of
Mr.

Mr. Westbury and Mr. Belladen) prepared for the mirthful meeting.

As this genteel assembly were to meet at the largest room in the town, nearest to Mr. Elrington's, the company with whom he was acquainted, met at his house, and sallied forth from thence.

Miss Gilmour made a very brilliant figure by the richness of her habit, and the blaze of jewels with which she was adorned: but the amiable Myra struck every beholder with the elegant simplicity of her appearance. She had no ornaments: but her beautiful auburn hair, having been dressed by Miss Gilmour's woman, appeared to the greatest advantage. It was partly formed in large curls, and some of her glossy locks flowed carelessly upon her neck, the whiteness of which could not be equal-

ed. The praises which she received from all who saw her gave a lively tincture to her cheeks, which, with the modesty and innocence of her looks, made her inconceivably lovely. Even Charlotte could not help secretly confessing that she had never thought Miss Belladen handsome before.

If Myra appeared thus pleasing to one of her own sex, to one who had been a sort of rival, what attractions must she not have discovered both to Sir Edward and Lord George !

As to the former, he was quite lost in transports of love and despair : he gazed on her, till he was almost deprived of his senses : he scarcely breathed while he looked on her. When she caught him so doing, which was not unfrequently, he threw down his eyes, and
heaved

heaved such sighs, that they pierced the very bottom of her heart, while she endeavoured to avert her eyes from him, and to conceal her blushes.

Lord George, who neither felt the tenderness nor the awe with which she inspired Sir Edward, addressed her boldly: not indeed with all the freedom of a libertine, that character he, through policy, forbore to assume, but with all the fervor of one. But as of two evils, poor Myra was inclined to adhere to that which seemed the least; abashed and alarmed, having no female friend near her, nor in truth any other in whom she thought she could confide, with her heart pleading strongly for Sir Edward, whose respectful tenderness to her added strength to its pleadings in his favour, she ventured, though not
without

without much dread and apprehension, to put herself, at his request, under his protection.

As Myra had never been at such an assembly before, and was afraid of committing an error, among the variety of dresses which astonished her, and prevented her (totally unaccustomed as she had been to mix with such a confused medley of people) from knowing one from the other, Sir Edward, ever watchful for her safety, and having observed the behaviour of Lord George to her, which had raised some suspicions in him, kept close by her side. His dress was a plain black domino. There were others in the room in the same dress, but as he never stirred from her side, she could not well make any mistake.

Lord

Lord George, who for some time appeared in the dress in which he went from Mr. Elrington's, paid Miss Gilmour the compliment of dancing the first minuet with her, and made use of the next opportunity to take out Myra, who civilly declined the honour of his offer, to the no small satisfaction of Sir Edward. In vain did his lordship avail himself of all his rhetoric, to persuade her to dance with him, and Sir Edward had the additional consolation to find that she refused every man in the room who addressed her upon the same occasion. When my lord quitted her, therefore, to offer his hand to another lady, he said with a sigh to her which he could not confine to his bosom, As Mr. Westbury is absent, Miss Belladen, will you favour me with your hand for country dances?

I must

I must be excused from dancing at all, sir, replied she; and if you will give yourself leave to reflect upon my present situation, you will not, I believe, condemn me.

Condemn you! said Sir Edward: no, no, Myra, I have never yet had the slightest reason to condemn your conduct. Would to heaven that I could as easily excuse my own! but, having acted wrong from the beginning, I shall never, I am afraid, be able to extricate myself from the difficulties with which, through my own folly, I am cruelly embarrassed.—The first wrong step is too frequently fatal.

Here he stopped: and as Myra did not in the least comprehend what he meant, she was also silent. A new uneasiness, too, had taken possession of her mind.

mind. As she had entirely declined dancing, because she could not, in her opinion, have danced with propriety, and as she had moved but little from her seat, she began to think that the constant attendance of Sir Edward at her elbow, might be particularly noticed: she was, nevertheless, fearful of losing him in the crowd: yet she deemed it more prudent to mix with the company. She did so, and was soon accosted by a mask whom she had not observed before, who endeavoured to engage her in conversation, and pressed her, with the greatest vehemence, as the evening advanced, to retire into a little with-drawing room, and accept of some refreshment; but he pressed her to no purpose: she refused his repeated solicitations. His
impor-

importunities then began to grow urgent. Observing that Sir Edward had been prevented from following her, by a gentleman who detained him in chat, he took the advantage of those lucky moments, and drew her gently towards the room to which he wished to carry her. Myra was now alarmed: she looked round for her protector: Sir Edward flew to her relief, and taking her by the other hand, asked her whither she was going.

No where, said she, in a frightened tone, if I can help it.

There is no person, replied Sir Edward, fiercely looking at the mask who had attacked her, who dares to offer any rudeness to you madam, while I am here. Put yourself under my protection, and I promise to defend
you

you with my life from every kind of insult.

Upon the delivery of this spirited speech, the mask immediately quitted her hand, who, almost terrified to death lest a quarrel should arise, and lest Sir Edward's life should be endangered on her account, could scarce support herself. He led her to a seat near some ladies, and having informed them that she was suddenly indisposed, ran to fetch hartshorn and water for her, which she swallowed, though with difficulty, and soon found no other disorder but what proceeded from Sir Edward's tender sollicitude about her. By that sollicitude, she was so sensibly affected, that though she thought she should have been guilty of the highest ingratitude in driving him from her, when she

no longer wanted his assistance, as the ladies to whom he had introduced her, had treated her with the greatest politeness, she did not imagine that she should commit an indiscretion, if, after having thanked him for his services, she asked him whether he would not dance that night, as she saw several ladies disengaged who would, she imagined, be glad of so good a partner.

As the only person in the world, with whom I wish to dance, madam, said he, with a sigh, has refused me, I must desire to be excused:

Myra, but too well understood his meaning. She blushed, but made no reply.

As Lord George, pretending that his arm was not perfectly well, had kept himself disengaged, he watched every opportunity

opportunity to speak to Myra, sometimes in his first habit, and sometimes in different dresses, but Sir Edward's vigilance hindered him from accomplishing his designs. He made, however, one more attempt when the company broke up: amidst the hurry which they were in to get to their carriages, he came and seized the hand of Miss Belladen, in order to convey her to the coach: but Sir Edward, having foreseen his lordship's movement, staid ready prepared to wait on her himself to it. She therefore withdrew her hand from his lordship's, and followed her conductor through the crowd, who seated her by Miss Gilmour, and, stepping in after them, ordered the coachman to drive to Mr. Elrington's to whom

whom he safely delivered the two ladies.

Miss Belladen, highly satisfied with Sir Edward's behaviour, after she had thanked him for all his civilities, retired, with a respectful curtsy to her apartment, leaving Miss Gilmour to entertain her uncle with an account of the ball.

Charlotte, indeed, had been very happy at it, for young Astley, whose graceful person and address gained upon her every moment, had, under the disguise of a mask, danced with her, during the greatest part of the evening; an happiness which she would not have permitted him to enjoy in a more public manner. By thus dancing together, their mutual inclination was so much increased, that she consented

sented to meet him in the park next morning.

Lord George, the contriver of the masquerade-scheme, was the only person who returned from the ball dissatisfied with it: for he found that instead of having turned it to any use, he had only rendered Miss Belladen more shy of him, and more upon her guard.

Myra, when Mr. Westbury came again to visit her, and he still visited her often, tho' not so frequently as he did before his father grew so dangerously indisposed, related to him Sir Edward's civility in taking care of her, and Mr. Westbury took an opportunity to make that gentleman a proper compliment for his friendly offices.

Lord George, mortified to the last degree at his double disappointment,

as he had been unsuccessful in his designs upon both these fine girls, and becoming more and more enamoured with Miss Belladen, formed several plans in order to lure her to his purpose, but not one of them seemed to flatter him with hopes that he should be a triumphant lover. He, therefore, began to project his departure from a place which had afforded him so little entertainment: and after having, with a multitude of polite expressions, which always flowed very freely from his lips, acquainted Mr. Elrington with his intention to proceed on his journey the next morning, he set out upon a strole round the adjoining village, meerly by way of amusement.

4 DE 58

END of the FIRST VOLUME.

